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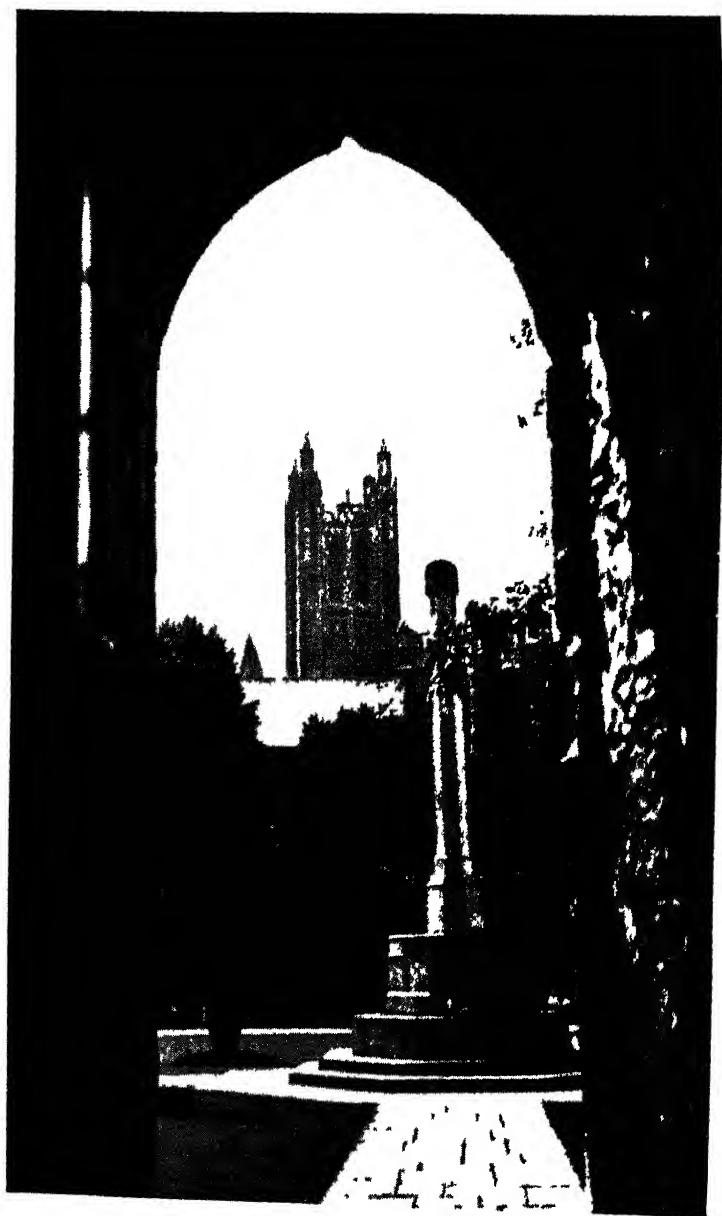
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DOWN ENGLISH LANES

By the Same Author

BEYOND THE ROCKIES
(*J. M. Dent*)

IN ENGLAND TO-DAY
(*J. M. Dent*)



BELL HARRY, CANTERBURY, FROM THE KENT WAR MEMORIAL
Frontispiece.

DOWN ENGLISH LANES

" . . . these quiet corners are the nursery of the ideals of England, home and beauty. Through long years of absence they call as the ultimate haven of rest to the man who has spent his days and his strength in the rough and tumble of politics or business."

The Times, March 8, 1933

BY
LUKIN JOHNSTON

WITH A FOREWORD BY THE
COUNTESS OF WILLINGDON

ILLUSTRATED

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To
THE WISEST COUNSELLOR
AND MOST TRUE FRIEND
MAN EVER HAD—
MY FATHER

FOREWORD

THIS is a book for exiles—those thousands of English men and women whom Fate sends to spend their days across the seas, in great Dominions, in the strange lands of the East or in forgotten islands of the Pacific.

I have been an exile for many years and so it is this book appeals to me, for whether under the burning sun of India or amidst the sparkling snows of the Canadian winter, it is to England—Home—that one's thoughts so often turn. The splendour of snow-capped peaks and endless forest, the brilliant colours which form the pattern of the East are forgotten in the memories of the sound of a church bell stealing across English fields on a summer's evening; the vision of an old cart creaking down a winding Sussex lane at dusk, or the fragrance of English woods in Autumn.

But the appeal of this book may not end, I think, with those whom we call "exiles." For the love of England is as strong in thousands of our fellow-subjects born in the Dominions and Colonies as it is in the stay-at-homes, and to them also these sketches should bring visions of the land they call "the old Country" though, perhaps, they may never see it.

It was on the shore of the Pacific that Lord Willingdon and I first made the acquaintance of Mr. Lukin Johnston. We met at Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island; and there—as always when English men and women meet far from Home—we talked of England and its atmosphere surrounded us.

This book brings back to memory just those simple things that English people love to recall when far away—

the Yorkshire dales, remote and beautiful ; the New Forest, " new " despite a thousand years of history ; the pleasant leisureliness of Sussex lanes ; those simple countryfolk so full of unaffected courtesy and so unconscious of their own dignity. The exile yearns for such things as these—or failing them, for a picture that shall make them vivid.

For in a troubled world, to the " exile," the homedweller and Dominion-born alike, these things stand as the symbol of England's unchanging stability. They form a bond of sympathy and understanding stronger than any political tie.

Down English Lanes, then, is a book for all our folk at home or afar, and I wish for them such pleasure as its sketches have provided for me.

Mari L. M. - don

July, 1933.

INTRODUCTION

HERE are simple tales of random wanderings in England—of London Town a few, but most of villages and country towns up and down “this green and pleasant land.”

They tell of inns and churches; of the Surrey woods in autumn glory; of Yorkshire dales in early summer; of historic towns and humble hamlets which have seen, and played their part in, the great pageant of England’s history; of simple, kindly folk, unconscious that they and unnumbered generations of their forbears have been the material from which has been moulded the English character.

Herein is no attempt to paint the English scene in full. For such a canvas must show dark spots in plenty—squalid slums which shame the name of England; stark poverty and hopeless lives of millions; untilled lands, derelict mines, and shipyards lying idle. While such blemishes exist, there is the greater joy in contemplating what remains of the England of happier days.

These tales are set down by one who, by virtue of long years spent in Canada, may claim to know the sort of dreams of “the old Country” that come to English men and women who have left their native land to make new homes beyond the seas.

But not alone for these are they set down. Despite the enormous increase in the number of motorists, and the network of public transport facilities radiating from London in every direction, the byways of England are still unexplored territory to a very large proportion of the population. It may be that these tales will lead the wayfarer to a wider knowl-

edge of some historic hamlet of Yorkshire and Devon, or to a better appreciation of the unsullied beauty of the New Forest or the hills of the Welsh borderland.

Finally, to scores of thousands, born in the Dominions, who have never crossed the ocean, the very words "Old Country" bring visions of a land of ordered peace and stability, of grey stone cottages, of little fields and narrow lanes, of yokels who speak strange tongues. To all these, perhaps, these sketches of England—these smatterings of history and legend—may make appeal.

LUKIN JOHNSTON

London, July, 1933.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

FOR permission to republish the sketches of which this book is composed, the author is indebted to *The Southam Newspapers of Canada*. As their representative in London it has been his pleasant task to attempt to paint the day-to-day picture of English life and thought. In the performance of this mission he has had opportunities of wandering far afield in these islands.

His thanks are also due to *The Times* for their kindness in permitting him to reproduce some of the illustrations in the book.

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DOWN ENGLISH LANES

CHAPTER ONE

In which mother and daughter arrive from Canada and are thrilled by the magic of London and the beauty of England's peaceful countryside—between them they experience all the emotions which are the lot of the returning "exile" and the Dominion-born visitor who sees England for the first time.

I. THEY came to stay with us one Monday evening in July. By the following Monday night, I declare they had seen more of the sights of London than I have seen in five years. But then, you see, they were rubberneck-tourists unashamed, out to see all they could in ten brief days. What enthusiasm ! What energy ! On the go from early morning until dinner-time—and up again, ready for the fray next morning with appetites undiminished for the sights and sounds of old London.

"They," I should explain, were mother and daughter—old friends from Canada. I presume there is twenty-five years' difference between their ages—but in their capacity as tourists "doing London" they might just as well have been twin sisters of twenty-one.

I'm going to tell you about them because I imagine they did and said and thought just those things that every mother and daughter from across the seas, in similar circumstances, would do. Anyway, it was a joy to see them "on the job" as it were—"thrilled" by things we take as commonplace ; marvelling at the beauty or picturesqueness of sights we pass without a turn of the head.

* * * * *

Mamma had not been in England (nor in her native Ireland) for twenty-five years. Daughter was making her first visit to the Old Country. So you can imagine it was an exciting day for them (and for us) when they arrived in London and we met them at Euston. They had come from Ireland after spending two weeks with relations. One gathered that there had been times in those two weeks when they felt like strangers from another world after so long an interval.

There was nothing unusual in that, however, for anyone who has been separated from the family hearth for half a lifetime will tell you that it is apt to be a sad business—linking up again with friends and relations of one's youth. When the ocean lies between, one keeps always the vision of those "at home" as youths and maidens of one's own young days. We lose count of the passing years ; and come back to find them grey-haired and middle-aged. There are gaps in the circle, too ; Aunt Maria (always our favourite in the merry days so long ago) has been gathered to her fathers these many years. Others have grown used to the loss, but to us, her absence comes as a shock. Cousins are hard to recognise ; even brothers and sisters seem separated from us by a gulf almost too difficult to bridge.

But we must put aside these saddening and inevitable disappointments. Here we are at Euston. Mother and daughter are jumping out of the train, all excitement at meeting old friends, bewildered by the noise and confusion, and despairing of ever finding their baggage in all the seemingly hopeless jumble of trunks and suitcases piled on the platform.

Then comes the thrill of the first glimpse of London traffic—the scarlet buses, the quaint-shaped taxis, the stolid policeman—all so "different" to anything to be seen anywhere else on earth.

On occasions like this, I have learned to turn myself into a sort of non-stop tourist guide. I interrupt breathless, gossipy conversations going on in the back seat of

the car to shout about places of interest we pass. "This is Marylebone Road—Madame Tussaud's," I cry to unheeding cars. We turn down Edgware Road. I point to Marble Arch, and try and get them to look at the crowds round the orators inside the park railings. I wave a hand towards Grosvenor House, the Dorchester, and expatiate on the sadness of the disappearance of the old mansions in Park Lane, once the town houses of the wealthiest in the land. (My efforts go unheeded!) I slow up as we turn into Piccadilly and manage to get some response as I point out "Number 145," where Princess Elizabeth and her parents live. And so through Wellington Arch, down Constitution Hill (which isn't a hill at all) to pause awhile and gaze at Buckingham Palace. Then the Mall, round Trafalgar Square—and, at last, I come into my own, for I insist on an interval in the tongue-wagging contest while the view of the towers of Westminster down Whitehall is really appreciated.

At length we are out on the open road—and there are exclamations of delight at the sight of English park lands, wondrous trees of huge girth standing majestically alone in fields; and white-flannelled figures of cricketers intent on their game as we go by. We make a detour so that they may see the Derby course and try to imagine for themselves the scene on the first Wednesday in June when half a million people are massed along the course and over the Downs that now look so peaceful and clean.

So we come to our gate—and the dog and the cat are there to join in the welcome; baggage is unloaded and there's supper to follow. Later, in the dusk, we sit in the garden and hear about mutual friends across the seas—until only the shadowy forms of the trees and the pergola below are visible. Tired out with travelling and excitement, mother and daughter go to bed—to dream, no doubt, of the thrills that await them in London on the morrow.

2. They were desperately anxious to see the House of Commons in session. Most of all they wanted a chance to hear Mr. Lloyd George speak. Therefore, tickets were obtained for them for a day when it seemed certain that the little Welshman would be heard in debate.

I drove them up to town early in the morning—for they planned to fill the hours before it was necessary to reach the House, with sight-seeing. Parking the car, I walked along Downing Street with them. "Mamma" insisted on going up to the door of "No. 10" and touching the knocker. I gathered there was some superstition about this—but its import was beyond me.

Then I steered them through the dark passage that leads from Downing Street to Horse Guards Parade. At this early hour of the morning there was not a soul about when I turned them loose. I watched them march off in the direction of Lord Roberts' statue and, from the passage way, I looked back to see them gazing at it in rapt admiration.

After that they were bound for a walk down the Strand—"Just to be able to say we've walked down the Strand you know"—and thence they were bent on going to the National Gallery, the British Museum and Westminster Abbey. No normal native or resident of these islands ever confesses publicly that he or she is going to the British Museum, of course, but then some license is allowed to tourists from Canada if they choose to do these eccentric things.

I had told them that, to be sure of getting a good seat in the Members' gallery, they should reach the House—by way of Westminster Hall—by 1.30. At that hour, happening to be in the direction of Westminster, I went to see if they had arrived. Sure enough, they were there, and a policeman had told them to be back at 2.15 to get a good place in the queue.

At 3.30 that afternoon I went to the Press gallery.

"Mother and Daughter" were first into the gallery at the opposite end as soon as the spectators were admitted at 3.45.

For an hour I watched them off and on, and then went out. At 6.45 I came in again—they were still there, glued to their seats and both leaning forward eagerly so as not to miss a word of the nonentity from the government back benches who was holding the floor. I went out for dinner, returning at 8 o'clock. "M. and D." were still there—and I became anxious lest they should be thinking of sitting it out to the adjournment at 11 o'clock. Therefore, I sent a message by an attendant, saying that, if they could tear themselves away, I would meet them in Palace Yard with the car at 8.30.

I am afraid my invitation to drive them home was not very welcome—but they had managed to drag themselves away from the stuffy chamber—full to the brim with memories of an afternoon they would never forget, I'm sure. They had heard Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Neville Chamberlain—but not, unfortunately, their idol, Mr. Lloyd George.

On the Sunday we decided that their education would be neglected unless they could be taken to see Canterbury Cathedral. Bright and early we set out on the 80-mile drive—through some of the loveliest parts of Surrey and Kent; through Westerham, where we must needs stop while notes were taken of the wording on the "plaque" of the house where Wolfe lived as a child; through Sevenoaks, to pause and marvel at the view across the park of Knole House, the ancestral home of the Sackvilles, with its turrets and bastions, its 365 rooms, 12 staircases and seven courtyards; through Tonbridge, Maidstone and Chilham, where we made a detour to get a view of the castle. As we went mamma noted down the quaint names of "pubs" we passed, with chuckles of huge delight. There were "The Hop Pole," "The Cottage of Content," the "Lamb and Lark," "The Jolly Ploughman," "The

Leg of Mutton and Cauliflower," "Cricketers' Arms," and heaven knows how many "White Harts" and "King's Heads."

So we came to Canterbury and lunched at the good old Rose hotel. Later we passed through the Christ Church gate into the quiet precincts—and, suddenly, came face to face with the marvellous view of the huge cathedral set in its surroundings of green lawns and trees, the square Bell Harry tower in the centre, soaring up into the skies. For quite a minute, our tourists stood still to drink this in and impress the picture on their memories.

As we entered the cool vastness of the nave, afternoon service was going on in the choir and the echo of the canon's voice intoning the prayers reached us in a quiet monotone that seemed to translate us at once out of the bustling world outside. The anthem followed, and we sat quietly listening to the flood of mellow sound echoing and reverberating in the distant aisles and chapels of the great building.

Of course, we must wander through the cloisters; see the spot where Archbishop Becket was murdered, inspect the armour of the Black Prince hanging above his tomb in "Becket's Crown," and note the tombs and monuments of longdead prelates and nobles.

Then out into the sunshine again and by way of the Dark Entry, where the ghost of Nell Cook is said to wander on Friday nights; across the Green Court to the courtyard of the old King's school, founded more than 1,300 years ago. Finally we must needs leave the old city by way of Harbledown to stop for our picnic tea at a point on Harbledown Hill whence we could command the glorious view of the cathedral dominating the patchwork of red-roofed houses and grey stone buildings.

To tell you of all the other activities of Mother and Daughter during their stay with us would mean giving you many pages from a guide-book. I remember that they went

to Westminster Abbey (and saw there many wonders that I have never yet seen) ; they went to Madame Tussaud's, to the Tower, to theatres and a dozen other places, before they left us for a quiet spot on the Cornish coast where they might digest all they had seen and recuperate after their hectic round of sight-seeing.

THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER TWO

I go forth to see the glory of England in Spring-time—and explore the New Forest in my quest for peace and beauty. Beaulieu's checkered history sets me dreaming of the past, and at Buckler's Hard I see visions of Nelson's fighting ships.

I. I INHABIT an office in a quiet, historic backwater not far from Blackfriars Bridge. If I lean out of my window I can see the sun glinting on the golden cross on top of St. Paul's Cathedral. If I glance upward I can see a small triangular piece of sky. But 99 per cent. of the view from my office window is taken up with a solid red brick wall. A buttress projects from it and, in summer, I can make a good guess at the time of day by the length of shadow cast by it. Twenty-six red bricks there are in each row on the buttress—one long, one short; one long, one short—seventy-two rows of red bricks one above the other within my range of vision.

There are times when a mood of unreasoning hate seizes me as I count and recount those dull red bricks. A good part of my life has been spent in the open air and to look upward and see blue sky in that little triangular patch is to conjure up tantalizing visions of open country—green fields and shady trees; great stretches of open prairie, silent forests and mighty rivers; snow-capped peaks and tumbling waterfalls.

Such a mood seized me one heavenly Spring morning. The air of London stifled me; the unceasing rumble of traffic was an irritation beyond endurance. I determined to play truant. I would shake the dust of the city from my

feet and get out into the country where I might see all the glory of England in Spring-time.

I consulted the map. The New Forest—less than 100 miles from London was the place for me. There I should find England at her best ; could walk for miles over a carpet of crisp brown leaves and fill my lungs with sweet forest scents. I would go to the New Forest.

Thus the morning found me at the office, clad in the outward trappings of a respectable journalist. By mid-afternoon I was on the road to Hampshire, looking much less respectable, but feeling far more comfortable, as the car sped on through Leatherhead and Guildford ; along the glorious 8-mile stretch of the " Hog's Back " between there and Farnham ; down the long steep hill at the foot of which lies Winchester, the ancient capital of England, with the immense nave and squat tower of the cathedral sticking up out of the maze of dull-red roofs of the town ; through Romsey—and, at last, into the loveliest wilderness in England—the Forest of Norman William which they still call " New".

Slowly I drove through this sylvan paradise. Now the road stretched straight and level ahead through a tunnel formed of overhanging oak and beech, just beginning to break out into the mantle of Spring ; now I was out in the open, rolling heath and bracken-clad moor on either side ; or again the road twisted and turned through the silent forest where the undergrowth, already clothed in its first fresh green, stood out against the russet carpet of leaves. In shadowy, wood-filled hollows, I came across still lakes ; crossed streams whose banks glowed with the soft yellow of primroses. Shaggy forest ponies, and occasional stray donkeys, roamed at will ; and sometimes, on an open heath, blue smoke curled upward from the chimneys of gypsy caravans.

I turned down a by-road and drew the car to one side. I had picked on a forest glade where a dozen great oaks of

mighty girth stood in an almost perfect circle. There were beech and alder too, but the oaks seemed to stand like policemen holding back the smaller fry from this charmed circle. There were trunks among them so ancient that decay had set in, but their infirmities were mercifully hidden with the fresh beauty of a soft green veil of moss, the grey dyes of lichen or the even greater loveliness of ivy and woodbine. I sat down in the warm sunshine with my back against one of these forest giants with the map spread on my knees. In the perfect stillness, I wondered whether this tree against which I leaned had been there when William Rufus used to hunt the deer and wolves in this same forest 900 years ago.

But the afternoon was drawing in and I must make some sort of a rough plan for my explorations. I had it in mind that I would land, eventually, at Beaulieu, where I knew the Montagu Arms would provide me with the best of lodging. For this night, however, I thought I would stay within the forest itself. I picked on Lyndhurst as the best place to make for as a starting point for my expedition on the morrow. It was only six miles away and I could drive by way of Cadnam and see the fine view from the top of the ridge near the Compton Arms.

At Lyndhurst, undoubtedly, I should have stayed—but for the fact that I suppose I am a crank in the matter of inns. This one suits me ; that one does not—and often for reasons which must seem absurd to the normal person. I am one of those who dislike inns in country places which give themselves airs ; print the menus in French ; employ a flock of waiters in boiled shirts, and numerous porters and hangers-on in brass-buttoned uniforms ; inns which, in short, ape the ways of hotels in the West End of London.

Now Lyndhurst, being a town of some importance, and the centre to boot of a district where many wealthy people live in fine country mansions, has every right and reason to possess hotels of this sort. Tourists, for the most part, seem

to like the soft luxury of the city to follow them on their travels—and the harassed English hotelman is for ever being told to bring his hostelry up to date so as to attract the luxury-loving automobile tourist. Therefore I make no complaint; I merely state that, for my part, as a rule I like an inn which performs its traditional functions as the meeting-place of the common people; the place where the farmers gather on market days and eat round a common board; where the yokel drops in for his pint o' bitter and a gossip after the day's work, and where the humble wayfarer can get simple, clean accommodation for a night's rest.

Such inns exist to-day, of course, but too many have lost their charm in the effort to cater to the requirements of a public which no longer travels on foot or by coach, but dashes through the countryside by car at break-neck speed. I should have been happier in days gone by, I think, when the church and the inn were the two chief rallying points of English village life, and the good churchman was thought no worse because he happened also to be a frequenter of the inn.

Unhappily, with the growth of the great industrial centres, there has come a period when the repute of the country inn has suffered by being associated in the public mind with the "public house" which has proved a curse to the worker in crowded cities. But to the initiated, the "inn" and the "public house" are still poles apart.

This hotel at Lyndhurst where I dined was an excellent place of its kind, no doubt—but it made no appeal to me at this time. A uniformed porter met me at the door, and an obsequious waiter—(not without a doubtful glance at my rough clothes) bowed me to a seat in the dining-room. The head waiter came forward with the menu; another waiter proffered the wine list. Most of the guests were in evening dress.

Now I wanted none of these frills; I might like them in Piccadilly—but not in the New Forest. My thoughts ran

to a cut off the joint; a tankard of ale and cold apple tart. Instead, I was offered a menu which began with "Potage Viviance" and ended with "Bavarois Regence." I am quite unreasonable, I know; I should have chosen a different inn. But time was getting on and I was hungry. I was forced to say that "Selle de mouton à la Broche gelée" was what I needed and not common-or-garden "saddle of mutton." I agreed reluctantly to the suggestion of the waiter that I should take some "Choufleurs au Bechamel" which, without its disguise, was, of course, ordinary, wholesome English cauliflower. But I made up my mind that this was no place for a tramp like me to spend the night.

I called for a local paper and my eye fell on an announcement that the New Forest foxhounds would meet at Boldrewood Green at noon on the following day. That was the sort of event which fitted my mood admirably. The anticipation of it thrust from my mind the annoyance I felt because I had not lighted on an inn which exactly suited my tastes. I would be at Boldrewood Green at noon on the morrow.

* * * * *

2. As a fox hunt, I imagine the day's sport was about as near a complete wash-out as could be. To begin with, it was a day of positively summer heat and the ground was hard and dry. That meant the scent would not "lie"—even if they found a jolly old fox to chase. As it turned out, althought they did "find" quite early on, the scent was soon lost and the miscellaneous crowd of riders wandered hither and thither through the woods and over the heather for hours without a single good gallop.

For my part I didn't care a hoot whether they found forty foxes or none—preferably the latter, because no one has ever been able to convince me that the wretched little animals really like playing hide and seek for their lives with

a pack of blood-thirsty hounds hot on their trail. In April, when the breeding season is on, the cruelty of the business is more obvious than ever. So I would rather the fox escaped every time.

Anyway, I only came to this meet at Boldrewood Green because it provided an objective for a tramp like myself who wanted an excuse to see the beauties of the forest in the first days of early Spring. As far as I was concerned the hunt was a grand success.

I shall not bother you with details of the day's "sport." But my walk to the meet was a joy. The road to Boldrewood Green from Lyndhurst runs westward until you come to the Swan Inn (there's an inn at almost every main cross-roads in Hampshire!) Then you branch off "left-handed," as they say in these parts, and come first to a tiny hamlet called Emory Downs. Here is the New Forest Inn, and again you branch "left-handed."

The meet was not until 12 noon; the sun was hot as June and I had ample time to stop now and again and smoke a pipe on the banks of a stream and enjoy to the full the quiet of the woods, the beauty of the shrubs just bursting out of the bud and the fragrant sweetness of the heather and bracken, as potent as incense in a church in the warm air. Only one complaint I could make—that in this part of the forest there seemed to be no wild flowers as yet, no primroses or violets—only the brown carpet of leaves—and the birds were silent.

As I sat on the stone parapet of a little bridge across a stream, along came a huntsman in pink coat and velvet cap and with him a groom riding his master's second horse. Their voices came to me a long way off as they clip-clopped along in the stillness, and I caught snatches of their talk—all concerned with horses and hunting with which their whole lives seemed to have been bound up. As they passed they gave me a cheery "Good day" and agreed with me it was too warm for good hunting. Dangerous, too, they

said, for a horse could stumble easily with the ground so hard.

Following behind them, I came at last to Boldrewood Green, a fine open space bordered by thick woods and giving a view to the north over the forest which stretched down into, and beyond, a wide valley. There were not more than half a dozen pink coats in a field of forty, and half the field wore short coats and "bowler" hats. Their mounts were a weird collection too. Along with a few first-rate powerful hunters, there were schoolboys on sturdy cobs, farmers on rough-looking general-purpose mounts and a few riders, both old and young, on what looked to be ordinary forest ponies, so small that in some cases their riders' feet nearly touched the ground. A strange cavalcade in all. What they lacked in looks, however, they seemed to make up in good-fellowship, for everyone knew everyone else, it seemed, and the youngsters were all excited to be off.

We will leave the hunt to look after itself. My friendly huntsman and the groom with the second horse set off in a different direction through the forest, planning no doubt to meet the hunt later on. I attached myself to them, and although only once again did I see hounds or the hunt, I had a marvellous ramble along quiet forest paths, round thickets of delicate green undergrowth, into wide valleys and up again to look-out points on the far side of them. Every now and then the huntsman would hold up his crop for silence and we would stand stock still listening for a sound of the horn. But we were out of luck—not a sound did we hear; and so for more than two hours we wandered on. The sweat poured from my brow, but I dared not lose sight of the huntsman for fear I should get lost in this vast silent world of the forest where trails criss-crossed in every direction.

I left them at length when the road to the New Forest Inn came in sight—and somewhere about 2.45 there was a

plate of bread and cheese and a glass of nut-brown ale in front of me for a belated lunch.

While I sat in the inn over my frugal lunch, I heard two girls, who had been following the hunt, ask anxiously of the landlord about the chances of a bus to Ringwood. I offered to give them a lift as I had no particular plans and Ringwood was only ten miles away. I must say they looked rather doubtfully at my rough clothes, which gave no indication that I could have even an ancient car in the offing—but they accepted tactfully enough.

I felt I had cause to be grateful to them later, for the drive took us through some of the loveliest parts of the forest, and later, wandering somewhat out of my way on the road to Beaulieu, I came on the hamlet of Minstead.

What first arrested my attention at this village was the sign of the inn. The place was called "The Trusty Servant" and the swinging sign was a reproduction of the famous painting at Winchester college—a pig dressed in human clothes. While I filled my pipe by the village green I spotted a sign which said "To the church." Of course, I must needs draw the car to one side and make my way up the path to the top of the hill where stood one of the strangest little churches I have ever seen—strange both inside and out.

In the churchyard was a man engaged in re-turfing the edges of the path. "Why did they put the church on top of this steep hill?" I asked. "Perhaps to make 'em sleep the better when they get to the top for good," he said with grim humour. "Leastways, they don't wake up when we've carried 'em up here for the last time." But he was proud of the little building with its square, brick tower and wooden spire sprouting out of the top, looking so out of keeping with the grey stone of the rest of it, and urged me not to miss seeing the inside.

I was glad I took his advice, for a more extraordinary church I had never seen. I should imagine that almost



I MET A BENT OLD MAN, CARRYING ON HIS
BACK AN ENORMOUS LOAD OF BIRCH WOOD



BEAULIEU VILLAGE

every century since the thirteenth has contributed some addition to the building, but to me the most interesting things were the colossal "three-decker" pulpit built of rough oak, a deep gallery over the west end of the church where the tiny organ is placed, and, finally, the two extraordinary old family pews, one belonging to the Castle Malwood nearby and the other to the squire of the district. One of them, shut off from the common herd by a high oak balustrade, has a fireplace in it and the seats have cushions, a privilege denied to the rest of the congregation.

There are all sorts of other interesting historical features, among them three "hatchments" which, in case you did not know it, are plaques showing the armorial bearings of deceased persons, with their "achievements" set out in heraldic design. There are two "hatchments" of the Compton family, who for generations have been the squires of the district. The third "hatchment" is that of the Earl of Errol, who was buried in the Compton vault under the chancel. The story goes that the earl died so much in debt that the creditors seized the body to prevent burial. The old squire, however, went over and sat by his bedside, prevented the body being taken away, brought it to the Manor House, and had it buried in his own vault. In the list of rectors which goes back to 1297, I noticed that since 1781 there had been five Comptons holding the job, one of them for fifty-six years from 1842 to 1898.

I wandered along leafy byways past Burley, and on an open stretch of road, came on an old, bent man carrying on his back an enormous load of firewood. Of course I stopped to talk to him, and learned his name was Henry Bailey, of Poulner. "There ain't much work about," he said, "and a man must do summat, so I bin gathering firewood." I marvelled how a man of his age could carry such a load. You know that, at one time, there were all kinds of strange rights allowed to descendants of the old "squatters" in the forest, and some of them exist to-day. One of them is the

right to as much deadwood as a man could reach with a long-handled crooked stick—from which comes the saying “by hook or by crook”—and for all I know old Henry Bailey was exercising a right which had its origin in the time of William Rufus.

Many other interesting sidelights on Forest customs I came across. I met a man driving a band of Forest ponies before him, and learned that by payment of about 2s. (50 cents) a head a year to the authorities he could graze as many ponies or donkeys as he wished. The Forest is still administered theoretically, by the ancient “Swainmote,” or Forest Court, although now under the jurisdiction of the Department of Woods and Forests. At Lyndhurst the Court still meets at stated intervals in the Verderers’ Hall. In olden times the officers, such as the verderers, regards, foresters, woodwards and agisters, administered the complicated laws relating to “Venison and vert” (deer and wood), and of New Forest timber were built many famous ships of England’s navy in centuries gone by. To these lower officers of the Forest fell the duty of allotting the rights of grazing and of collecting wood and peat, among squatters possessing “Chimney rights.”

As you explore the Forest you come, occasionally, on encampments of gypsies, some of whom you may discover are descended from families who have made their homes there for centuries. They choose the site of their encampments so as to be sheltered from the sea winds which sometimes lash the forest. Their caravans, painted in bright colours, with smoke curling up from them, innumerable children playing about and horses hobbled as they graze, are picturesque survivals of the days when the forest was the finest royal hunting preserve in England.

I suppose nowhere can you find a people more steeped in tradition and superstition than these New Forest folk. They are full of fancies and beliefs in signs and portents. From them comes the belief that, to ensure good luck, one

must turn one's money over when the New Moon is seen for the first time. They believe that a burn is a charm against intruders when one's house is left unguarded ; that witches cannot cross a stream ; that the Death's Head moth was never seen before Charles I was executed, and that the Man in the Moon was sent there as a penalty for stealing wood in the forest.

Nowhere in England at least, I should think, do people cling so tenaciously to the rights and customs of the past. In their place-names, as in their customs, are constant reminders of their history. There are still gypsy encampments, I was told, for instance, at a spot called "Col d'arbres" ("The ridge of trees") so named by the Normans who came over with the Conqueror. The gypsies, I imagine, are probably happier when left without the civilizing influence of modern times. They go to school, perhaps, but are apt to revert to their traditional way of living as soon as they are released. To go barefoot suits them better than to wear shoes and stockings, and to live their wandering lives in the Forest and caravan better than the shelter of brick and stone cottages.

* * * * *

4. It was evening when I crossed a broad expanse of open heath and stopped at length to impress on my memory the first view one gets of Beaulieu nestling in the trees at the bottom of a hill. The sky was overcast and the air so still that the blue smoke curled up from cottage chimneys in vertical spirals. To the left I could see the tall chimneys of an imposing grey stone mansion—the Palace House where lives Lady Montagu of Beaulieu ; straight in front was the cluster of red-roofed cottages that marked the centre of the tiny hamlet. There was not a sound to disturb the stillness, except the dim murmur of water from the river as it passed over the weir.

This was my second visit to Beaulieu and once again I

found the peaceful beauty of the place had for me a certain quality of melancholy. I knew that down there by the river were the ruins of the old Abbey, crumbling stones of what had once been imposing buildings—the chapter house, cloisters, presbytery and the vast abbey church itself. I knew that beside the smooth green lawns of the cloisters, in a tiny stone-walled garden of its own, was the last resting-place of the Second Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, a man much beloved, whose possession of the ruined abbey had been for him a sacred trust, and who had done much to beautify and restore some parts of the ruins. Lord Montagu died only four years ago at a comparatively early age, and everywhere one hears him spoken of with deep affection and respect. I had seen in the Refectory—now the beautiful Parish Church—the simple white marble tablet to the memory of the wife of Lord Darling, the famous judge, who had died twenty years ago in early middle age.

Perhaps it was these things that influenced my mood as I approached Beaulieu—the sadness inseparable from contemplating the ruins of exquisite buildings which had once been the pride and joy of men who had fashioned them with their own hands ; the instinctive sense of sharing, momentarily, the sorrow of others deprived too soon of dearly-loved companionship.

But it is unfair to Beaulieu, perhaps, to approach it with thoughts like these—and I do not want to let them spoil whatever pleasure you may gain from accompanying me to the Montagu Arms, to the Abbey itself, and later to Buckler's Hard, that quaint spot nearby, where many of England's most famous fighting ships of a century ago were built.

Here we are then at the centre of the village. On the right just at the end of the main street—the only street, be it said—there is a substantial building which, were it not for the painted sign that swings outside, you might well mistake for a country house. It is the Montagu Arms—to my way of thinking the pick of all the inns at which I have stayed

in England. If there were nothing else to see at Beaulieu, I should willingly go to this remote part of Hampshire just for the joy of experiencing the comfort and charm of this unique hostelry. I'm inconsistent, of course—having in mind that at Lyndhurst I moved on because I found boiled-shirted waiters and uniformed porters and so forth. For the Montagu Arms has these “trimmings” —but the “atmosphere” is different and they are not too much in evidence. Here there is no impersonal frigid air of an “hotel,” but a spirit of hospitality which welcomes you as a “guest” rather than as a “client”—and there is all the difference.

By the time Mr. McEntee, the proprietor, had himself piloted me to the garage, and had shown me with proper pride the beauties of his sunken garden and the herbaceous border beyond, I had been made to feel that the comfort of even such a humble wayfarer as myself was something that really mattered. From the latticed window of my room I looked down on a sheltered lawn bordered by stone walls bright with aubretia, arabis and yellow allysum; there were masses of polyanthus and wallflowers too—all in full bloom. Later I discovered an oak-pannelled lounge, with a great open fireplace and deep armchairs, giving out on to a terrace beside the garden at the back. There was a library, too, with books about the New Forest and the history of Beaulieu and the neighbourhood.

After dinner, in the quiet dusk, I wandered down the road which leads to the Abbey; paused on the bridge across the weir, and sat for a while beside the banks of the Beaulieu River. The clouds had lifted and the rays of the sun, now sunk behind the horizon, tinted them with every shade of saffron and gold. Behind me the outline of the Gate House of the Palace—once part of the Cistercian Abbey buildings—and the tall trees behind it, were silhouetted against the sky; waterfowl rose up from the muddy banks of the river, the tide being out, and a few boats were left high and dry.

I fell to ruminating about the brethren who had chosen this isolated spot for their home so many centuries ago, and on the stormy tales I had been reading of their history. More than seven hundred years have passed since Beaulieu was founded by King John—who lives in history as the worst king England ever had. They say he founded the abbey because of a dream he had after he had ordered the abbots and other members of the Cistercian Order to be trampled to death under the feet of his servants' horses. He dreamed that night that the abbots had scourged him with rods, and, as a result of the interpretation placed upon his dream by a member of his court, he relented and begged pardon of the Cistercians. Whatever the truth of that tale, certain it is that the founding of Beaulieu Abbey was one of the few good things attributed to King John. The monks who had come to England from Citeaux, near Dijon, in France in 1202, chose the site for the Abbey because of its remoteness and the absence of any habitations in the neighbourhood and the King granted them extensive estates in addition. They were a "contemplative" order whose members took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were sworn to silence—except when addressed by their superiors ; they were to be clad in the meanest of garb, to win their food by their own manual labour, and to spend long vigils in their comfortless cells.

We need not follow their story through the centuries, except to note that among the abbots were men of distinction and noble character—and others whose abuse of their privileges led finally in 1539 to the suppression and destruction of the abbey and the dispersal of its twenty monks. Discoveries made from time to time have shown the great extent of the abbey buildings and their noble proportions. The Abbey was one of the few which possessed the full rights of "Sanctuary" for criminals. Every consecrated church and churchyard in England at one time had the right to give Sanctuary for forty days (except for those

guilty of the crime of sacrilege) but to only three or four was the right given to grant protection for the whole lifetime of offenders. The Sanctuary of Beaulieu gave shelter to at least three persons whose names live in England's history—Queen Margaret of Anjou, The Countess of Warwick, widow of the Kingmaker, and to Perkin Warbeck, Pretender to the throne, who was finally hanged in 1499.

Still pondering on the strange vicissitudes of history, I wandered through the abbey gateway to have one more glimpse of the buildings beyond before I turned in. Finally I fell asleep with my window wide open to the warm air, and with the soft murmur of the weir in my ears.

Before the village was fully awake next morning, I was taking the path past the abbey towards the forest, along a private road marked "To the House in the Wood." I did not see that I could do much harm by using the road, even if it was "private," and, as was to be expected at this hour, I passed not a soul for half an hour or more.

But if there were no humans abroad so early, there were plenty of animals of various kinds whose activities had begun. The dew was still on the grass and cows browsing in the fields raised their heads enquiringly as the gravel crunched beneath my feet. Rabbits went helter-skeltering across the path; a brace of partridge flew up in alarm; cock pheasants could be heard calling their mates—and over all was that delicious smell of earth and humid leaves, which in Spring is somehow full of the tang of bursting new life, and in autumn is redolent of the melancholy of the dying year.

I passed "The House in the Wood" in due course, tucked away in the forest; turned right-handed as I was bidden by a lad feeding the chickens in a yard, and came to a farmhouse where I thought I might beg or buy a glass of milk. I went through the gate of Ley Green Farm and, leaning over a low brick wall, chatted with the farmer, William Penny, while I sipped my glass of rich milk still warm from the cow. We talked awhile of cows and crops

and of Canada and the world in general and then, by another route, I made my way back to Beaulieu.

Just before I came to the Montagu Arms, I peeped through the open door of the old mill which stands beside the weir. I got talking with Mr. Norris, the miller, and very soon I had forgotten how hungry I was, and found myself looking over one of the most amazing old plants I had ever seen. For parts of this mill, so Mr. Norris told me, dated back to the thirteenth century! He bade me look at the great cog-wheel beneath the floor, whose cogs were made, not of iron or steel, but of apple-wood, at Lymington, a few miles away. We clambered up some steep, narrow stairs and came to his store room. There, all neatly stacked, were bags containing oats and barley; wheat from Persia; linseed cake and "sharps" from the Argentine; maize from South Africa; bone-flour ground of oyster shells from Florida. What a foolish idea, I thought to myself, for any country to imagine it could be self-sufficient, when here in this little mill in an isolated Hampshire village, products of half the world must be stocked to supply the needs of a farming community!

In a large room at the back, which gave out on to the river, there was an extraordinary collection of oddments which roused my curiosity. I learned that Mr. Norris had a habit of picking up odds and ends at sales—and before I left found myself the proud possessor of a full, if battered, set of croquet mallets and balls purchased for the sum of a few shillings!

After breakfast I felt I must spare time to pay another visit to the abbey grounds before I set out for Buckler's Hard, three miles away. There were no other visitors—only the attendant at the gate to take my sixpence entrance fee—and I wandered about the deserted passages and courtyards, trying to re-create in my mind the picture of the abbey as it was in its prime. It is easy to follow the lines of the old structure, for everywhere there are notices telling

the visitor that this gate or that led to such-and-such part of the abbey. I spent some time, of course, in the church, and admired immensely "The Domus," once a dormitory of the lay brothers of the Cistercian order. The late Lord Montagu rescued this splendid chamber from the decay into which it had fallen as a lumber-room and had it reconstructed as it is to-day. It is now the focal point of all the community activities of the village—a noble room with a great fireplace (modern, but perfectly suited to its surroundings) its roof supported by massive tie-beams, and with a gallery built above to one side.

There is a museum also, full of relics of the past, including one of those rare archaeological treasures—a double-heart coffin. Centuries ago, you know, it was the custom to bury portions of the bodies of distinguished or much-loved persons in different places, under the belief that the souls of the departed would derive advantage from prayers by several congregations. For heart burials, special coffins were used, and in the case of husband and wife such a coffin would have two spaces hollowed out to receive the ornamented receptacles in which the hearts were enclosed. Many other things of interest I found there, including life-size figures dressed in the robes of the Cistercians of 500 years ago and a model of the abbey as it was after completion from the early thirteenth to the sixteenth century.

Finally I came to the cloisters and stood for a while at the iron gate which shuts off the resting-place of the late Lord Montagu, his first wife and father, from the quiet enclosure of the cloisters. There is a touching inscription which tells of his deep affection for Beaulieu. "He loved Beaulieu," it reads, "deeming his possession of it a sacred trust to be handed on to his successors. In like manner he endeavoured to restore and beautify the abbey in the same spirit, desiring that—

'The Peace which passeth all understanding
should continue to be present therein.'

Lord Montagu was descended from that Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who became Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII in 1544. It is not hard to understand how a place of such perfect beauty, whose history can be traced back into the misty past would come to be its owner's most sacred possession. And for the second Lord Montagu, who loved Beaulieu so well, what could be more fitting than that he should rest there in his quiet garden, bright with polyanthus, daffodils, forget-me-nots and the brilliant colours of rock plants—all so lovingly tended—in the midst of the ruins he regarded as a "sacred trust."

* * * * *

5. Hard Buckler's!

I am prepared to wager that not 1 per cent. of the people of the British Isles have ever heard the name. As for the casual visitor from abroad—he would be exceptional indeed if he had tumbled across this forlorn-looking single street of cottages tucked away in the remotest south-eastern corner of Hampshire.

And yet little more than 100 years ago Buckler's Hard must have been as well known as Devonport is to-day. From this now-forgotten backwater, close to Southampton Water where the great ships of steel and steam come and go, many of the most famous fighting ships of the line of Britain's Navy were launched in Nelson's Day. Here for seventy years the welkin rang with the din of the shipwright's hammer; the labour of the wood sawyer; the clang of the anvil in the smithy's forge. And at intervals there was the music of bands and the cheering of multitudes of people as the great square-bottomed ships, built of stout New Forest oak, took the water.

Who remembers the glories of Buckler's Hard to-day? All that remains of the once-prosperous town are those two rows of red-brick cottages, one on either side of the grass-grown street that slopes down to the water's edge—placed

so wide apart that the great logs of timber could be dragged between them broadside on. In place of the hum of activity of 1789 there is an eerie silence over it all broken now and then by the roar of a seaplane from Calshot aerodrome a mile or two away, or the siren of some great modern liner making her way up Southampton Water.

But the British Navy does not forget Buckler's Hard and its ships. In the records of 100 years ago the name of Master Builder Henry Adams is writ large and his fame rests secure in the records of such ships as *Agamemnon*, 64 guns, launched at Buckler's Hard in April, 1789. This was the ship that Nelson loved—"the finest '64' in the Service" he called her. It was the *Agamemnon* he commanded when he lost his right eye in the siege of Cadiz. At Copenhagen and Trafalgar, too, she was in the fighting line, to be wrecked at last on the River Plate. In all forty-six fighting ships for the Royal Navy were launched at Buckler's Hard between 1745 and 1818.

From where I jotted down some notes for this chapter, in the bay window of the Master Builder's House, I could have thrown a stone to the old slipway where the *Agamemnon* was built. And just beyond to the right is the cradle where the *Illustrious*, mounting 74 guns, the finest ship of her day, was given form and whence she was launched in July, 1789. From this spot old Henry Adams, at his working table, could keep his eye on the stocks where scores of skilled workers—the shipwrights and caulkers and moulders—laboured to provide stout ships of oak which carried the flag of England in a hundred famous fights. From here, too, he could keep his eye on the rise and fall of the tide on the flats beyond the river proper.

What stirring times this one-eyed village has seen! Can you picture it all—on the day of a big ship-launch? Mark you, it is on record that as many as 10,000 people have assembled here at Buckler's Hard to see one of the proud vessels take the water. And, of course, all must come by road or boat. Every road would be crammed with coaches,

chaises, saddle-horses and pedestrians. Failing chaises, many would come in tumbrils and farm wagons. There would be scaffolds and booths for the spectators down there at the foot of the street by the water where now there is only the shed of a solitary shipwright. All "the quality" would be there too from many miles around; and old Henry Adams would be in his element among the great company of his guests at the celebration after the launching. Listen to a chronicle of the time recording the celebration after the launching of the *Illustrious* in 1789; "A great concourse of very genteel people assembled on the occasion, about 150 of whom stayed to dinner, and the day was spent with great conviviality." And there was a party in May the next year when Admiral Sir Harry Burrard, he for whom Captain George Vancouver named "Burrard Inlet," (Vancouver's splendid land-locked harbour), christened the frigate *Beaulieu*, of 36 guns, when we learn 80 sat down to dinner and danced till 3 o'clock next morning, Sir Harry among them. Oh yes, indeed, you may smile at the one-horse street of Buckler's Hard to-day—but there were days when all England knew of the great work done there!

And to-day? Well—for the moment Buckler's Hard may be of no great account; just a pleasant, convenient mooring for yachts in the summer months, a place where yachtsmen can foregather in the excellent guest house now established in the Master Builder's house.

But in the early days, when John, Duke of Montagu, was dreaming his dreams of a great West Indian port established here so sheltered yet so close to the open sea, there was the hum of activity on every side. For the Duke had conceived a great idea. He owned the sugar-producing island of St. Lucia. On the other hand his manor of Beaulieu was heavily timbered with the finest oak in England and enjoyed, moreover, all the privileges of the Cinque Ports as a free harbour—a legacy inherited from the Abbots of Beaulieu. In addition, the ironworks at Sowley Pond,

where the great forge-hammer was worked by a waterwheel, were within easy reach, four miles away.

What more sound than that His Grace should build up here a great port? He issued a map in his endeavour to attract shipbuilders and shipowners—and the letter-press reads strangely like the advertising literature for some new port of to-day in the New World. “Bewley is situated,” it stated, “between Southampton and Lymington and is more Advantagious for Trade than London and Bristol, by reason that the ships may sail from this harbour to the Eastward, with the same winds Ships may from Bristol, with which they cannot Stir out of the River of Thames, and to the Northward with the same winds they may sail from London, with which they cannot Stir out of Bristol.”

And His Grace was prepared to offer all sorts of advantages to prospective settlers. They were to be granted “a Piece of land 170 feet in depth and 40 feet in Front, at the Yearly Rent of Six Shillings and Eight-pence only; every house to have a close of land belonging to it of 2 acres if required; three loads of Oak-timber to be allowed gratis for every House to be built; these grants to be made for 99 years, if either of three persons nominated shall live so long, without paying any fine for the same.”

All this activity occurred in 1742 and '43, and the settlement grew with the need for ships. When, however, in 1748, the island of St. Lucia was declared neutral by treaty, the Duke's bright hopes of a great West Indian trade went up in smoke. But by this time the shipyards were well established and for the next seventy years Henry Adams and his sons after him maintained their yards building men-of-war and merchantmen. It was the younger sons of Henry Adams, Edward and Balthazar, who brought the firm to ruin in 1818 by undertaking to build four fighting ships at once. The strain on their finances was too great, they were mulcted of heavy fines for failing to produce the ships on time, and an ill-advised lawsuit against the Government

brought to an end the career of Buckler's Hard as one of England's shipbuilding ports.

Be that as it may, on the two occasions when I have been at Buckler's Hard my fancy has been pre-occupied with visions of a hundred years ago—days of ceaseless activity as the stout ships of England's battle-line took form down on the stocks in Beaulieu River. I have seen the grass-grown street alive with active men—bearded carters, whip in hand, urging on their six—and eight-horse teams as they dragged huge timbers down the slope to the water's edge. I have pictured the men at work in the New Forest to the north hewing down the mighty oaks ; the sawyers, stripped to the waist, ripping the great trunks, hard as iron, into planks for hulls and struts and decking ; the ironworkers over at Sowley Pond, sweat streaming from them, as they pounded the joints and castings of red-hot metal into shape. For thirty months the work must go on for every ship of 74 guns. For a vessel of 1,300 tons burden more than 2,000 average oaks must be cut in the Forest ; 2,000 loads of timber to be hauled to the shipyard ; 100 tons of wrought iron and 30 tons of copper also.

And so preoccupied have I been with these visions that, perhaps, by contrast, I may have made you think that Buckler's Hard in 1933 is a village of the dead ; that nothing now disturbs its slumbers.

But, indeed, I should be at fault to give any such impression. In the winter months, perhaps, the settlement may be allowed to relapse into a state of coma, to dream its dreams of the past. But from May to September, I assure you there is plenty of life and activity in Beaulieu River. For Buckler's Hard is a favourite anchorage for the trim white yachts which abound all summer in the coastal waters and round the Isle of Wight. Frank Downer, Harbour Master at Buckler's Hard, is one of the busiest men of his calling. Even in April, when last I was there, he was busy enough—what with the anchorages, getting the buoys in

shape, allotting berths, collecting harbour tolls and doing the odd bit of piloting up-river from Southampton Water. Already at that time there were a dozen yachts anchored in the stream and as many at the dock or hauled ashore getting their paint and tackle seen to for the season. They tell me that in June one may often see as many as a hundred yachts off Buckler's Hard and the old place is busy enough in all conscience.

The Master Builder's House, now run as a guest-house by Mr. and Mrs. Foster-Pedley, has all it can do to cater for the wants of the yachtsmen and their guests. No one can visit Buckler's Hard, either by road or by water, without going to this House of Memories. Changed, of course, it is from the time when Henry Adams made it his headquarters and directed from it his work of national import. But with proper reverence for its historic associations and a blending beyond criticism of the practical with the artistic, the Master Builder's House has been adapted to its present use. In every room there is something to remind you of Henry Adams and his mighty ships. Round the walls hang a unique collection of portraits of Admirals and Captains of the Royal Navy who served aboard the ships of Buckler's Hard. There are naval architects' drawings of some of the most famous ships and other reminders of the great days of long ago. You can tread if you like the oaken floor of the old banqueting room where the "very genteel people" who came to celebrate the launchings danced until the small hours; or you can look out from the casement window where Henry Adams used to sit at his drawings and accounts. In what is now the main dining-room you can admire the great brick hearth discovered some years ago behind a coating of plaster and now put to its original use.

Until recent years there lived in the remaining cottages at Buckler's Hard, descendants of some of the old families of shipwrights who had worked in the yards in the great days a century ago. But to-day the old families have nearly all

drifted away—and strangers who knew not the great days, live in the cottages. “Time brings many changes,” wrote Lord Montagu, “and the sails and wooden walls give place to steel armour and steam-turbines. But the spirit of brave Englishmen who fought by shore and on open sea remains.”

I copied these lines, which I found in a frame on the wall of the Master-Builder’s House :

The ships they built at Buckler’s Hard
 When Nelson sailed the seas,
 Had sturdy ribs of forest oak
 And masts of forest trees.
 Down the Beaulieu River
 Till the water opens wide,
 Where the silver salmon linger
 For the turning of the tide,
 Out along the Solent Road,
 The ancient Navy way,
 The ships they built at Buckler’s Hard
 Set sail in Nelson’s Day.

The grass is green at Buckler’s Hard,
 The Master shipwright’s dead ;
 The wild duck and the willow wren
 Are building there instead ;
 Up and down the Solent go
 The ships of steel and steam,
 And there’s only salmon lying
 By the banks of Beaulieu stream.
 No frigates take the water now,
 No workers throng the yard,
 But the River still remembers—
 Down at Buckler’s Hard.

Someone has added these lines—intended, presumably, to replace that sad last stanza :

The grass is green at Buckler’s Hard,
 The Master shipwright’s dead
 But in his ancient homestead
 You may rest your weary head.

Up and down the Solent go
The ships of steel and steam,
But still at Adams' one-time home
They keep his mem'ry green.
No frigates take the water now,
No workers throng the yard,
But the Master Builder's House remains—
And the peace of Buckler's Hard.

Before I left this place of stirring memories I walked a few yards up the street from the Master Builder's House and came on one of the strangest and most beautiful little chapels-of-ease it is possible to imagine. It is just the front room of one of the cottages on the straggling street, yet decorated and furnished as a chapel with perfect taste and simplicity.

I do not wish to hurl too many verses at you, but I must be forgiven if I quote the lines which hang in a frame near the door. Whether you happen to be a Christian, a follower of Confucius or an Atheist, you can hardly fail to be impressed with their beauty :

Here is a quiet room
Pause for a little space ;
And in the deepening gloom
With hands before thy face
Pray for God's grace.

Let no unholy thought
Enter thy musing mind—
Things that the world hath wrought—
Unclean—untrue—unkind
Leave these behind.

Pray for the strength of God
Strength to obey his plan ;
Rise from your knees less clod
Than when your prayer began
—More of a man.

I found affixed to the wall, a small silver plaque which read :

“ This chapel was set in order by one who loved

Peter Wolferston Rylands
R.A.F., Aged 18.

Killed while flying over the Solent
on Friday, August 9th, 1918.
‘ Per ardua ad astra ’.”

THE HOME COUNTIES

CHAPTER THREE

Autumn Tints in the Surrey Woods—I encounter Poachers at work—and Trespass on Lord Beaverbrook's Estate—A Nightingale Hunt takes me to Blindley Heath and East Grinstead.

1. SUNDAY—and a glorious day at that! I set out early from home for a ten-mile walk through the Surrey woods—determined to shake off the “blueness” with which I had been oppressed. I donned an old khaki shirt, old flannel trousers and my old war-time boots, which have known the mud and dust of hundreds of miles of trails from the Peace River, in the Far North-west of Canada, to the American boundary. Totem, my dog, was bounding all over the place with excitement at the prospect of a tramp.

Church bells, ringing lustily, warned me that unless I was to be seen in this wild garb by the respectable suburbanities on their way to church—and so be put forever without the pale—we must hurry away to the woods. So we went by unfrequented paths in the direction of Headley.

Soon we breasted the top of Epsom downs, and paused to look out over the gorgeous sea of autumn-tinted woods rolling away over the downs to the far horizon to where the spire of Headley church pierced the skyline. Everywhere the deep green of the woods was splashed with tawny bronze and warm yellow tints. The oaks clung to their summer green, but the chestnuts already had turned to pale gold, and here and there a scrub maple lent a splash of brilliant red.

A rabbit sat on his haunches and peered curiously at us from the edge of a wood close at hand. Totem dashed towards him at breakneck speed—but without great danger

to Brer Rabbit. Down in the open valley below us, stable-boys were exercising a string of blanketed race-horses. To and fro they went, now walking slowly, now, at a word from the trainer on the fat bay cob, breaking into a gentle trot. Their voices reached us faintly. The sound of the bells from the town two miles away came fitfully to us.

We plunged into the woods along the path towards Mickleham, leaving Headley away on our left. The path was soft beneath our feet with heavy dew, and leaves fluttered down in thousands to make the carpet softer still. Presently we crossed a byroad and interrupted a country lass and lad holding hands on a log by the roadside. An hour's walk at a good steady gait brought us into Tyrrell woods. We had not seen more than half a dozen human habitations on our tramp, and all the time the woods stretched before and around us. Now we could see the spire of Ranmore church topping the downs south of Leatherhead. We came to an open field, enclosed all round by thick woods—and decided it was time for a breather.

The dew had gone at last, and while Totem explored the underbrush, I lit a pipe. Soon Totem showed signs of excitement and, following the direction in which he peered intently, I spotted two brawny legs encased in leggings. The low sweeping branches of a tree hid the rest of the man's figure. There was no sound as I went forward to reconnoitre.

I pushed aside the branches—and found myself regarding three individuals intently watching the rabbit burrows all around. "Poachers," said I to myself. Obviously I was not likely to be very popular with these gentry. However——

"Good morning," said I. The nearest man—he of the brown leggings—looked around and showed me a scowling face as near the exact counterpart of Bill Sykes as I ever hope to see. "Sorry if I'm interrupting you," I said pleasantly. No answer.

Suddenly the mean little head of a long brown ferret came poking up from a burrow close to my feet.

"Here," said I, "you'll be losing your ferret."

Still no answer, while the creature nosed around. Bill Sykes squatting on his haunches kept his eyes trained on a net spread over a hole near him. The net had a long string attached to it and the end of the string was held by a confederate a few yards away. All of a sudden there was a commotion in the net, a squeak and an unfortunate rabbit came to an untimely end in Bill Sykes' hands.

Then he vouchsafed some attention to me and the ferret at my feet. He lurched over towards me, grabbed the squirming ferret with one hand, held it close to my face, and, shaking the other fist at me, said in a fierce husky whisper, "'Ere what the 'ell d'you want? 'Op it or I'll push yer blinkin' faice in!"

I sat still and was about to try and calm his suspicions of me, when Totem yapped loudly and attacked a yellow ferret as it emerged slowly from another hole. The ferret turned on him—and Totem howled loudly. At that Bill Sykes' confederates came over to where I sat and the three of them joined in hearty denunciation of me in threatening attitude because, they said, I had "spoiled their . . . game." I said I was extremely sorry about this—but since they refused to be pacified I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and left them to their interesting, if nefarious, labours.

So we came to an iron gate barring the way down a lane where cedars and yew trees almost met in an archway overhead. It looked so quiet and mysterious that we braved possible arrest and passed through the gate and down the lane. Through an opening in the trees I soon espied the grey roofs and turrets of a large country house about 200 yards away across the little wooded valley. It was completely shut off from the outside world—an ideal country retreat. As I looked at it and noted the green terrace before the house and the stone balustrade forming a sort of look-out, I recognised it as Churkley Court, Lord Beaverbrook's

country house. I thought, therefore, that it would be safe enough to sit down for another rest. I lay back on the soft bank, Totem took his accustomed place on my chest—and I think we both must have snoozed. Anyway I found myself in a half dreamy state trying to disentangle a weird jumble of pictures which seethed in my brain as a result of the six weeks I had recently spent in Canada. Niagara Falls seemed to be mixed up with the absurd little toy trains of England; a huge Canadian “combine” was trying to get to work in one of these little English fields that look like a piece cut off a Canadian pie, and an enormous yellow ferret was coming out of the Connaught tunnel in the Rockies!

In any case I decided on the way home that England in the autumn can be a very lovely place.

* * * * *

2. It is five o'clock in the morning—a May morning in Surrey. My typewriter is perched rather precariously on the ledge of the casement window of my room in a farmhouse—White Lodge Farm, Blindley Heath, in Surrey, to be exact. It is daylight, of course, but the sky is overcast and grey clouds are drifting swiftly by. The breeze rustles softly through the trees outside my window—a gentle background for the final chorus of the birds' matins in the woods across the heath. Their morning hymn of joy must be coming to an end soon for the music grows fainter gradually.

I have been leaning out of the window for fifteen minutes or more, drinking in all this soft beauty—the fresh green of the trees, the brilliant yellow of a nearby laburnum and the warm red of a hawthorn beside it, the undisturbed calm of the cows, already seeking their breakfast in the dewy grass; the clean freshness of this summer morning; the scent of wallflowers and May blossom. My mind has been a blank to all human workaday things. I hate to turn to my typewriter and break the spell of this heavenly scene.

However, life being what it is, I suppose I must come down to earth.

I am still in pyjamas—and may as well confess at once that I am almost unbelievably weary, when I come to think of it. I rolled into bed somewhere about 1 o'clock this morning and was up again by 3.45.

Sounds like a “thick” night, doesn’t it? But the fact is that the mild adventure of which I am about to tell you had its genesis in a letter I received from Hamilton, Ontario.

Here is a paragraph from an unknown friend’s epistle :

“Do you happen to know of any place near London where I could get a room in a country inn or farmhouse or some such place, and lie in bed and listen to the nightingale? And would there be any chance of your joining me (sight unseen) on a nightingale hunt?”

Now I had never heard a nightingale sing—indeed I have always been rather sceptical about it, if not actually hostile to this much-advertised bird. For of all living creatures the English nightingale has the keenest sense of publicity values. He is the most talked of bird in the world. For reasons best known to himself he chooses usually to sing when all ordinary Christian birds and humankind are fast asleep. All through the merry month of May hundreds of people in these islands sit up half the night waiting to hear him warble. I have always hitherto regarded them almost as cranks—and little thought that I should ever join their ranks.

Mr. Nightingale pretends to be indifferent to all this fuss. Sometimes he sings, sometimes he doesn’t. If the British Broadcasting Corporation sets aside a night for him, allocates two or three experts and several tons of machinery to capture his rapturous notes—as like as not he will become temperamental and refuse to warble a single bar. Despite the disdain with which he treats his admirers, tourists from all over the world still choose to visit England in May especially to hear him sing. And among these latter must be included my friend the Rev. Calvin McQuesten, president of the Hamilton Bird Protection Society, Inc., the writer of the letter which I

have quoted above. It is due to his appeal for aid that I have lost a night's sleep—but have gained a joyous, imperishable memory of one summer dawn in the Surrey woods.

We set out on this nocturnal expedition from Epsom late in the afternoon. Weather conditions were by no means propitious. It had been raining and the sky was overcast with heavy clouds—but in this climate you never know what the next hour may bring forth—so we refused to be deterred from our project.

We drove by way of country lanes through Kingswood and Merstham—and a mile south from Godstone we came to the wide open space known as Blindley Heath. Across the heath we turned down a rough side road and so came to this delectable old one-time farmhouse. It is farm no longer but instead is a “country guest and rest house” far off the main highway, backed by green fields and woods where countless birds perform their glorious “matins” and “evensong” undisturbed by man.

White Lodge Farm is a long, white building of two storeys, with casement windows and a porch that juts out from the centre. It is surrounded by wide lawns edged with trees which shut it off even from the modest traffic across the heath—a “rest house” in very truth. At one side there is a long range of buildings which once were the stables and which now house the automobile of the peripatetic traveller and certain fortunate pigeons and fowls. At the back there is a kitchen garden and an orchard against whose high walls peach trees thrive in the warm summer sun.

Perhaps the best description I can give of White Lodge Farm is in these lines of Rupert Brooke :

A bosky heath, a slumbrous stream,
And little kindly winds that creep
Round sunny corners half asleep.

Part of the old house dates from 1529, and in the kitchen and dining-room, which gives out on to the orchard at the

back, you can see the old oak beams in place four hundred years ago.

Well, this was the spot to which I lured my friend, Mr. McQuesten in search of the nightingale.

It was after the normal hour for supper when we reached White Lodge Farm. So, when we had deposited our "grips," I made this the excuse to drag Mr. McQuesten back to the car and to drive him five miles further down the main highway to the village of East Grinstead. Many times, when I had been passing through, the sign of "The Dorset Arms" had intrigued me, and this occasion, I thought, provided the opportunity for a further inspection.

We took our places in the dining-room at the back of the inn, looking out over a long, narrow garden, gay with flowers, below us; and beyond over the miles of woods softly green in their Spring raiment. We ate a six-course dinner such as hotels in towns far larger would have no need to be ashamed of; and later, as the sun sank behind the clouds, wandered down among the flowers to the end of the garden.

By half-past nine we were back at White Lodge Farm, ready for the fray. Our rooms were as "homey" as could be—the softest beds, running hot and cold water, shelves with books for any taste and only the breeze in the trees to break the stillness.

Resisting all temptations to roll into bed, however, we set out across the fields to view the scene of action. For an hour or more we tramped over fields sodden with rain and alive with frogs (how I hate frogs!) over fences, through dripping woods—now and then we stood still and listened as the startled cry of some waterfowl broke the quiet or a dog barked at a distant farmhouse. But never a blinking nightingale did we hear.

For my part I was fresh and unwearied at this time and able to enjoy the novelty of this queer expedition. But for

my friend Mr. McQuesten it was different. He had been in England only a week, but already was a veteran of the chase. From his own account of the hectic life he had been leading, he had spent just three hours between the sheets since he landed at Liverpool. The rest of the hours of darkness he had been on the prowl in woods on the northern outskirts of London, about Stanmore Common, or wandering along lonely roads in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. But he would not give in. Stubborn determination possessed his courageous soul—he would hear the nightingale or drop in his tracks.

Presently we were sitting in the garden of the farmhouse talking quietly of Canada and swapping reminiscences of old days on the prairies—days when he had charge of a Presbyterian Mission, and I was a common “bohunk” (tramp). I was talking to keep myself from getting drowsy, when suddenly I realised that my companion had fallen asleep. I thought the time had come to take a firm line with this redoubtable hunter.

“Go to bed, my friend,” I said. “I’ll wait up and call you if our quarry begins to sing.”

So he trotted off to bed and left me sitting alone under the trees, wrapped in an overcoat, waiting for the jolly old nightingale to pipe up.

For hours it seemed I sat there listening. Sometimes, to keep myself awake, I walked up and down the lawn and idly kicked a croquet ball through its hoops. Soon after midnight, I, too, could keep awake no longer and went to bed.

But I was excited ; I could not sleep. Long before dawn I sprang up, thrilled by a clear call which had me awake in an instant. I listened—the sound came again. It was some misguided domestic cock trying to steal a march on the rest of the feathered world !

I lay down again, and this time fell into a sound sleep. It was just coming to daylight. Suddenly I became dimly

conscious of a sound at my door. It opened softly and I felt sure there was someone in my room.

"Get up, old man, I think I've got it."

"Got what?" said I half asleep, "who the Dickens are you anyway?"

Then I perceived the robust form of Mr. McQuesten wrapped in his overcoat. In the dim light I could see a look of intense joy on his features.

So we stood by the open casement window. Outside there was the green lawn with the beautiful trees lining the fence—a great pink horse chestnut right opposite the window, and a tall laburnum richly decked with yellow blossom just to the left rustling gently in the light breeze. Beyond was the wide stretch of the heath with the mist just beginning to rise from it.

From the woods all round came a continuous flood of glorious sound—ten thousand birds seemed to be greeting the dawn. We stood at the window, not speaking—just keeping still so as not to miss one note of this marvellous chorus. It came from across the heath—not so close as to jar—but just far enough away to enable one, after a time, to distinguish individual songs. At first to me it seemed all a confused, rushing medley of glorious melody.

Then, as we listened, a deeper, more insistent note, seemed to stand out from the rest—a rich contralto "warble" rising and falling—and breaking now and again even to a soprano trill. A clear, connected, impassioned recitative.

"D'you hear it? That's it—that's the nightingale," said Mr. McQuesten in an awed whisper.

The rich imperative note ceased for a moment. It became soft and pleading. Then from a spinney behind the farmhouse came the answer—gentle, soft, caressing. . . .

For half an hour we stood there and listened, and, at length, Mr. McQuesten left me for his own room. At

this moment, as I write, I expect he's sound asleep, feeling as though his trip across the broad Atlantic has been worth while. It's time I turned in too. . . .

I'm awake again! Just as I was falling asleep at last—the door opened again and Mr. McQuesten poked his head in.

“Please—what's the name of this farmhouse?” he says, “I'm writing to my mother to tell her where I heard the nightingale!”

They're a hardy breed—these nightingale hunters! Nothing can daunt them—and when their goal is reached they can't rest until they have shared their joy with others. I'm rather proud to have joined their ranks for one brief, happy night.

CHAPTER FOUR

In Kentish hopfields—I meet London slum-dwellers on their annual holiday—and become chauffeur-courier for an afternoon to an American tourist—We visit Cranbrook and Tunbridge Wells.

1. "I PICKS 'ops—and my ole man drinks beer. Beer's a curse to 'im—and 'ops is a blessing to me. Albert won't give up 'is beer—and I won't give up me summer 'oliday 'opping. So there y'are!"

Mrs. Downing, from Bermondsey—ample of bosom, smiling, but determined of countenance—paused for a moment in her task of dexterously stripping the fragrant hops from the vine into her bin, and yelled at her two grandchildren who were fishing for tiddlers in a stream at the edge of the hop gardens.

"Come on aht o' that, you blinkin' brats!" she yelled. "Come and 'ave yer picters took by the gentleman!"

Mrs. Downing had been telling me that she had been down to the hop gardens at Paddock Wood, Kent, for her summer holiday for forty-eight consecutive years. She came first when she was fourteen years old with her mother. Now her three daughters were all married and they, too, came down "'opping" with their mother. "My eldest darter didn't take to 'opping, so I buried her at forty-two a year ago," she said with an air of conviction born of certain knowledge. "I'd be along with 'er if it wasn't for the 'ealth what I gets from 'ops."

I had suggested I would like to take a snapshot of Mrs. Downing. No sooner was my camera out of its case than scores of hop-pickers from bins all round took up the cry

"camera"—like the producer of a movie—and made a concerted rush to get in "the picter." They posed themselves round the colossal form of Mrs. Downing, chattering happily and demanding to know "What paper's it for, mister?" My stock fell heavily when they learned that I wasn't a press photographer at all. But they pressed on me the numbers of their respective huts in the hoppers' camps and made me promise to send them copies.

Now beer may be a curse to Mr. Downing, as his muscular spouse declared—but it is also undoubtedly true that the first process in making beer—namely, picking the hops—brings joy and health every season to some 40,000 men, women and children to whom it offers a month's escape from the dreary London slums where most of their existence is spent. To them "the 'opping" is the great annual picnic. What do they care if the pay is not very large, the hours long and the work tiring. What does it matter if the huts where they stay are small and comforts few. There's fresh air, and green trees in lovely meadows; the clean, fresh smell of the hops in their nostrils; freedom for the youngsters to play all they like without bothering their parents; and at night, in the villages, all the noisy excitement of the travelling fairs with merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries and everything. There are the "pubs," too—with sometimes an old piano for a dance, and fun and laughter every evening.

I drove into the village of Paddock Wood determined to see the hoppers in action. For miles before I reached there in the dusk, the country lanes swarmed with hoppers strolling along after the day's work. Some of them were bound for the fair; others just out for a stroll. Some groups walked hand in hand along the dark lanes, singing as they went—for these folks from the crowded city are not used to the lonesomeness of the country byways and sing to keep up their spirits and to frighten away the spooks. I stopped at the gate of a field and wandered over to the big

bonfires which were blazing near the long lines of huts. Supper had been cooked previously at the open fires, but when darkness comes sticks are thrown on to make a great blaze and crowds sit round them singing and laughing, determined to get all the fresh air and fun they can.

When, at length, I had found a lodging in a neighbouring village, I wandered off for a walk down the road in the dark, and soon came to a "pub" whence proceeded sounds of revelry. The little sitting-room adjoining the bar had been cleared out for dancing and two women of great girth were dancing boisterously together in fine style. One of their pals beat some sort of a tune out of the ancient piano. Other women, all with their mugs of ale beside them, clapped time for them and laughed uproariously at their efforts. Menfolk—local labourers, hop-pickers and farm workers—looked on and joined in the fun. One glorious time they were having—noisy and rowdy if you will—but all in the best of good humour and no one having more beer than he could handle.

Presently, when the womenfolk had gone, the men turned their talk to the hopping prospects, to farming in general and to politics.

"How are the hops this year?" I asked. "'Ow are they, guvnor? They just ain't, that's all," said one. "Why, there's growers round 'ere who have still got some of the crop of two years ago on hand. The crop's not bad—but there ain't no market now."

I protested that people seemed to drink nearly as much beer as ever. "That's right enough, guvnor," was the answer, "but for one thing the brewers don't put so much real 'ops in beer nowadays, and for another 'ops from abroad are dumped in here, doing our growers out of their markets."

That gathering was voicing sentiments you hear in scores of farming villages in Kent. Economic theories don't interest them much. All they knew was that hops had been

selling at less than 16s. (\$4) a hundredweight and they cost from £4 to £6 (\$20 to \$30) a hundredweight to grow. American hops, they said, were underselling them in their own home market, despite heavy duties—for Kentish soil calls for costly manuring which more than offsets the transport over 8,000 miles of ocean from Washington and Oregon. They knew that farmers had been making heavy losses for years—and that many of them had been forced into bankruptcy by foreign competition, not only in hops, but in grain, hay, and small fruits as well.

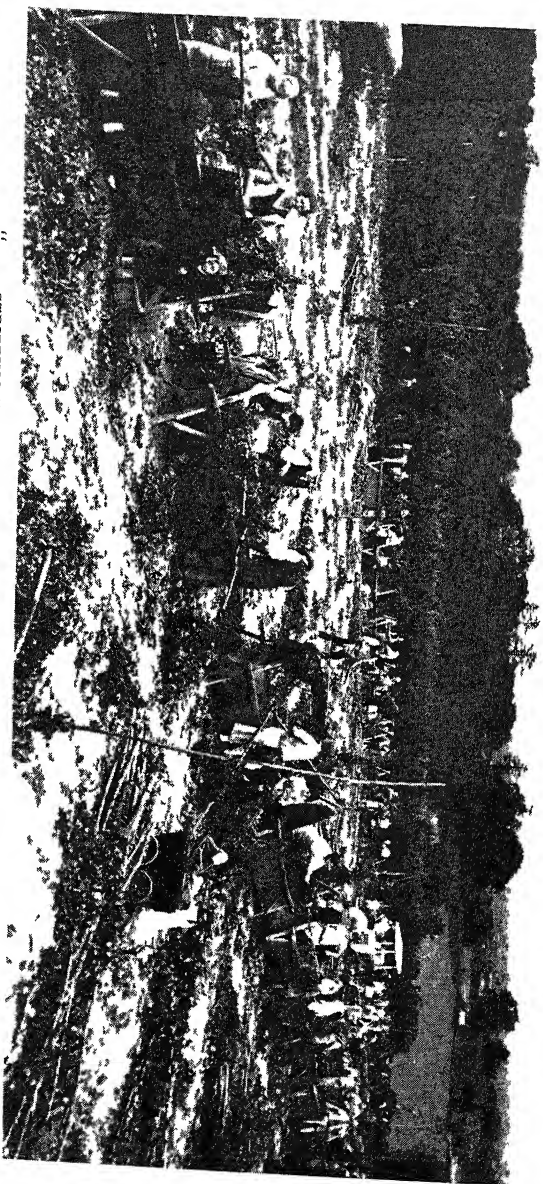
* * * * *

2. Whatever gloomy thoughts I had taken to bed with me the previous night as a result of the dire forebodings of agricultural disaster which I had heard in the Railway Tavern at Staplehurst, Kent, the first half hour among the hoppers at Beltring Farm, Paddock Wood, put them out of mind.

And this despite an unpropitious start to my day's wandering!

Mrs. Mosley, at the Railway Hotel, had shown me, with pardonable pride, her fine bathroom with hot and cold water laid on. I had allowed that I might like a bath in the morning—but that as I wanted to be on the road to the hop gardens before 6 o'clock, I would pay my bill overnight and let myself out quietly.

In the morning, I threw my shirt on the edge of the bath—not noticing in the dim light, that, thoughtfully, it had been left nearly filled with cold water to be ready for me. When I came to put the shirt on, I found to my horror that it had fallen into the tub—and it was the only one I had with me. I had no time to waste—so I decided that the coat of my pyjama suit must do duty as shirt for the day. Unfortunately, I wear pyjamas of particularly lurid colours. So I set forth arrayed in a temporary "shirt" of brilliant blue and pink! Despite some curious stares, I flatter myself that most



“ STRIPPING THE FRAGRANT HOPS FROM THE VINES INTO THE BINS

people I encountered during the day rather admired my taste in ultra-modern shirts !

I made for the Beltring hop gardens on the other side of Paddock Wood. I had had no breakfast, of course, and the air was chill with a mist rising from the damp ground. Sheep were lying in the meadows, clustered round the great oak trees, but of human beings, I met only an odd labourer on his way to work. Marden and Five Oaks seemed to be still asleep when I drove through, but Paddock Wood was lively enough with hundreds of newly-arrived hoppers setting out for the gardens, having arrived overnight, I suppose, by special trains from London.

They begin work at 7 o'clock in the gardens and when I passed the big "Tent Camp," hundreds of men, women and children were streaming across the field on the way to their tasks.

The organization of this great army of workers is really wonderful. When they arrive they are given tally cards. On it is the number of the "set" to which they are allotted. Each "set" comprises six "bins"—the big canvas holders into which the hops are picked. The "bins" fold up so that they can be carried from place to place. Ten sets (60 bins) make one "drift." Each "set" has a "bin-man" in general charge of operations. He is armed with a long pole with a knife at the end with which he cuts down the vines from the wires. In addition to the "bin-men" there are "measurers," "bookmen" and "field walkers." The measurer's job is to make rounds with the "bookmen" and ladle the hops out of the bins with a basket into the big sacks in which they are taken to the drying "oasts." These sacks are called "pokes," and it takes ten of the measurer's "baskets" to fill each one of them.

Sometimes whole families combine in one "bin"; but if the pickers are experienced, they divide up so that all the bins in a "set" are ready to be emptied about the same

time. Their pay is by piece-work—six bushels for 1s. (25 cents.) An experienced picker—and women are the best—can pick 40 to 50 bushels a day—but the average would be nearer 25.

There is no sight more picturesque than a hop garden when picking is in full swing. The dark green foliage of the graceful vines provides a background for the whole animated picture. The “girls” (every woman is a “girl” in the hop gardens, no matter what her age) wear bright-coloured dresses and shawls and they chatter and laugh as they work or as they carry their bins from one place to another. The youngsters play about on their own or help their parents. Babies are left in the Salvation Army “crèche” out in the field near the huts. The mothers pay threepence a day for this service, and provide the food for the infants, who are washed in this one month as, probably, they are not washed for the whole rest of the year.

Mr. Brooks, the courteous manager of Beltring Farm, which runs to nearly 200 acres—showed me over the oast houses, before the loads of “pokes” began to arrive. By midday, the fires are burning up in the oasts as the clumsy “pokes” are lifted by cranes to the drying floor and their contents spread round to a depth of two or three feet. Modern oasts—those queer-shaped round brick buildings with the white conical tops like witches’ hats, that dot the Kentish landscape—dry the hops by hot air, on the principle of a Canadian house furnace. Most of them, however, still use the old system of having the fire immediately underneath the hops so that all the fumes of the coal and coke must pass through them. For ten hours the hops stay in the oast house—six or seven for drying by heat, and the remainder to be cooled. Then the manager checks over the fragrant mass and decides whether it is dry enough to be packed into the “pockets”—the huge round sacks, each holding 160 pounds, in which they go to breweries.

3. For three hours this afternoon I have been acting as "courier-guide" to a tourist. If all his kind were as intelligent and such delightful companions as he—I should be inclined to take up the "courier" business as a permanent job.

This is how it happened.

You will remember that at 5.45 in the morning I left the Railway Hotel at Staplehurst and set out for the hop gardens near Paddock Wood, in Kent. All morning I spent among the hoppers and in the oast houses—and noon found me weary and painfully conscious of the fact that I had had no breakfast. I decided that I was entitled to a good lunch and that The George Inn, at Cranbrook, being only ten miles away, was the place to make for. My shirt—which, you remember, had unfortunately fallen in the bath at Staplehurst—had been hanging out of the car window all morning, but, since the sun refused to shine, it was still too wet to wear. There was nothing for it but to stick to the top part of my pyjamas in its place—and so brazen it out as though it was merely the latest fashion in men's shirtings.

The George Inn came up to scratch with an excellent cold lunch—no reason why it should not, seeing that it has 400 years' experience behind it. I lunched in lonely state in the "coffee room" which 300 years ago was used as the magistrates' court. In this room, too, Queen Elizabeth received from the townsfolk a present of a silver cup weighing 68 ounces to commemorate her visit to the town, at that time centre of the Kentish weaving industry. Edward III, you will recall, if you know your English history, imported weavers from Flanders to teach their craft to the men of Kent in the fourteenth century.

Later I strolled over to the church of St. Dunstan; admired its fine proportions and ancient monuments and noted the names of "Our people overseas for whom we pray." On such occasions naturally, I always note particu-

larly the names of those in Canada, and more than once have found among them friends or acquaintances. Here is the list from Cranbrook church; John Randall Davidson, librarian, S. A. Benny and Gwendoline Gilbert of Vancouver; Frank Gilbert, mountain guide; Percival David Gilbert, farmer and railway clerk, and Florence Gilbert, all of B.C.; Canon J. J. and Mrs. Davis, John and Mrs. Adair, farmer, of Saskatchewan. Just by the door a handsome marble memorial tablet caught my eye and I paused to read the inscription. It was as follows:

This tablet and these three windows were dedicated by Robert Henry Eddy, of Boston, Mass., to the memory of his ancestors, Rev. William Eddy, M.A., vicar of this church 1591-1616 whose sons John and Samuel and whose daughter Abigail were among the Pilgrim settlers of New England and there implanted for the benefit of a numerous posterity the religious principles here taught them.

I imagine that these were the ancestors of the husband of Mrs. Baker G. Eddy, founder of Christian Science.

Pondering on this I walked slowly down the churchyard path—and so came on my tourist-client.

He was sitting on the grass with his back against one of those queer old square tombstones which look like big stone boxes placed on the ground. He was busily sketching the church tower. I recognised at once that he was an American. Not by his clothes—for they were of the style of Bond Street; nor by any peculiarity of countenance—for he was just a good-looking man of any country—but by his shoes which were distinctly of his native land. They were tan shoes with white uppers—and it is unusual for an Englishman or Frenchman, or German to wear shoes of this particular pattern.

I sat down beside him and told him of the Eddy memorial I had just seen. He was too intent on his sketch to take much

interest in that—but it was not long before I discovered that my new-found friend was Mr. William Oliver Stevens, headmaster of Cranbrook School, Bloomfield Hills, Detroit, and that he had spared a day from a hurried tour with his family to come to Cranbrook especially that he might visit the ancient school from which his own took its name. It appeared that one of the founders of Cranbrook School at Detroit was a certain Mr. Booth (connected, I believe, with the Scripps-Howard newspapers), whose ancestors had come from this old Kentish town of Cranbrook, and that Mr. Stevens had promised him to make this little pilgrimage.

There began—for me—an afternoon of fascinating interest. I persuaded Mr. Stevens to let me drive him down to Tunbridge Wells to see the famous Pantiles, and to have a peep at the picturesque hop gardens where I had spent the morning. He demurred a bit at first. I didn't blame him. I'm afraid my country-ramble costume is never exactly "smart"—and to-day, what with my battered hat and the top of my brilliant-hued pyjamas doing duty for a shirt—I suppose I looked more like an escaped lunatic than usual. Mr. Stevens, however, suppressed whatever qualms he had and bravely agreed to let me be his guide.

I'm not going to bore you with a full report of our many-sided conversation. As we drove slowly through the lovely lanes of Kent, our talk ranged over a vast field. Now and again we paused to let my companion drink his fill of the beauty of some old half-timbered cottage; or again it was the noble grace and mighty girth of an old oak tree that took his fancy—and we would stop to compare the landscape here with the beauties of New England. Then we would pick up the threads of our talk again. We drew comparisons between the schools, both private and public, of England, Canada and the States; discussed the value, in the long run, of a university education; the importance and difficulties of schools of each country employing some

teachers from the other, so that youngsters should learn to know the good qualities of the respective peoples ; of the fine courtesy and friendliness my friend had met with everywhere in England, compared with the brusqueness and incivility he had experienced in some continental countries. Then, of course, we turned to politics and the prospects of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his National Government ; and the industrial and financial troubles of the United States—and countless other things that seemed to us to matter.

For me the time passed all too quickly, and after tea at Tunbridge Wells, we concluded that we must hurry if he was to catch his train for London at Tonbridge. We reached there just in time—and in future, when I pass through Cranbrook, Kent, I shall think with pleasure of my afternoon as guide and chauffeur to the headmaster of Cranbrook School, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

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THE YORKSHIRE DALES

CHAPTER FIVE

I make first acquaintance with the Yorkshire dales under expert guidance—Put up at the Devonshire Arms, Bolton Abbey—and meet a lad from Bradford on Beamsley Beacon.

1. My business in Leeds was finished by noon on a Saturday. I was fed up with the smoke and grime of cities ; with the noise of factories and the roar of machinery.

With an immense sense of relief, I packed my suitcase. I was free for 36 hours. Where should I go ? Yorkshire is rather far off my "beat." The south I know pretty well, and all the best inns where one can safely put up for a night. But up here I was at a loss, and I had heard that outside of the bigger towns, inns with good beds were few and far between. But from 2,000 feet up in the air above Leeds, I had seen that the smoke-stacks and railway sidings, the rows of houses and busy streets, seemed to cease abruptly as soon as the northern boundaries of the city were passed. I had a vague idea of exploring the unspoiled country which lay beyond the farthest of the new "garden suburbs." But how to find my way without a lot of vague wandering in that maze of roads and country lanes I had seen from the air was a problem. Where should I find myself by night-fall ? Where——

The telephone rang. A Mr. B. wished to see me—and it was Mr. B. thus providentially sent to me, who solved my problem. For he constituted himself my guide on one of the loveliest drives in all my wanderings in England. It appeared that Mr. B.'s brother and I had lived in the same district on Vancouver Island many years ago—and that,

coupled with the fact that he had a free afternoon, knew every lane of the Yorkshire dales and hated to see a stranger go away without seeing something of them, was how we came to be driving northward towards Harrogate and Ripon soon after our first meeting.

I cannot possibly do more than tell you just the names of some of the lovely out-of-the-world villages we passed through on that 70-mile drive. If you happen to know Yorkshire, at least they may recall to you one glorious part of this country. But to describe to you in detail all the picturesque spots we passed, or to tell you anything worthwhile of the age-long history of this part of England would be beyond me.

Like many "southerners," I had imagined that the west riding of Yorkshire was made up of smoky towns or bleak moors. I had no idea of the charms of Nidderdale, Wensleydale or Wharfedale. I knew nothing of those ancient villages of grey stone which have remained undisturbed while the rest of the world has been lashing itself into a frenzy of speed with trains, cars, buses and what not. I had no knowledge of historic spots like Barden Tower, Bolton Castle, Danby Hall or even Bolton Abbey.

I know better now. I know that within five miles of Leeds you can enter a fairyland of beauty, sometimes soft and gentle, where little rivers ripple lazily through green fields; sometimes rugged and stern, where the heather-clad moors stretch for unbroken miles. You can feast your eyes on wide-spread panoramas of farmlands, with little grey villages clustering round the old church towers, or you can drink in the beauty of tumbling waterfalls like Aysgarth or Hack Fall.

We started normally enough along the Harrogate road; paused to peep through the great gates of Harewood House, Princess Mary's country home; passed through Harrogate, with its stately avenues, fine houses and hotels; up the valley of the Nidd to Ripon; thence west to rest awhile and



“ WE RESTED AWHILE TO DRINK IN THE CALM BEAUTY OF
FOUNTAINS ABBEY, SURELY THE MOST PERFECT SPOT IN ENGLAND ”
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drink in the calm beauty of Fountains Abbey, surely the most perfect spot in England ; to Grantly, through a momentary flurry of snow and hail ; to Gravelthorpe and so to Masham, with its old mill down by the river, its great deserted market square once the chief sheep market of all this district.

My companion proved much more than an ordinary guide. He knew useful ports of call to which he steered us at all times of need. Thus about tea time we found ourselves at the house of a cousin, a charming old stone place on a hill overlooking a sleepy river which wanders through green pastures studded with yellow buttercups, just north of the village. The cousin, it appeared, was a keen fisherman and, when we arrived, had just come in from the river. As a result of his efforts we were able to inspect two diminutive fish, which I, knowing nothing of the fine points of the sport, unfortunately alluded to as "perch." My fishing has been limited to business connected strictly with "the pot" in prairie and mountain rivers. By way of keeping my end up, however, I told how on the British Columbia coast they catch salmon from 40 to 50 pounds with rod and line—and, I'm afraid, was put down as a liar for my pains.

I hated to leave this lovely spot, with the cricket ground down by the river to the left, the pitch roped off as though it were something sacred, the cattle feeding lazily in the deep lush grass and the river looking so still and peaceful. But time pressed, so we drove on past Jervaulx Abbey, away on our right, to Coverbridge where, across the Ure, we could see the ruins of Danby Hall, ancestral home of the famous Scrope family, one of whom, Archbishop Scrope, was beheaded in 1405.

We came to Leyburn through lonely byways, and here, found our second port of call. For as we paused on the top of a rise to get our first real view of the moors, my guide spotted an old friend, seated at his window watching

the ever-changing colours on the distant moors. Presently we stood by him at the window and from there, when the sun came out from behind the clouds, could see the outline of the moors stretching toward Great and Little Whernside. Beyond them again we could pick out the bold hump of Pen Hill. Even on a grey day like this there was fascination in this distant landscape, now in deep shadow, now brilliant with the red-gold of bracken and heather, with a background of clouds chasing each other across the sky. As we finished our drinks there was talk of the hard times of landowners in these parts; the prices they could get for their estates and their antique furniture; the iniquities of builders who had tried to buy the fields opposite to desecrate the view with their red brick abominations.

And from Leyburn we passed through Wensley, with its great oak tree on the village green; through West Witton, where we had a glorious view of Bolton Castle across the valley—Bolton Castle, where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned for six months, and whence she escaped by being let down from one of the narrow windows by a rope, only to be recaptured a few days later at "Queen's Gap," on Leyburn Shawl. Thence on up Bishopsdale and over Kidston Pass and so into Wharfedale. Through Kettlewell and Grassington we came to Barden Tower and at length, as darkness fell, to The Devonshire Arms and Bolton Abbey.

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2. I awoke next morning with a vague feeling of guilt. Lying still, in that delicious state half-way between sleep and full wakefulness, I felt somehow that I was playing truant. I had no right to be here in this quiet room with no sound to disturb me but the birds at their early morning exercises. Why was I not in Leeds or Sheffield, or some other smoky town, preparing to pursue my investigations into what Midlands manufacturers thought about Empire trade?

I gave it up for the moment. It was enough that the birds were singing ; that no street cars and traffic were rumbling through the streets below. When at length I looked out of the window, I remembered that, late the night before, I had arrived at this delectable spot. This was the Devonshire Arms at Bolton Abbey—and that rocky summit, far beyond the green fields studded with great trees and browsing cattle, where the sun was already glistening on the dew, was Beamsley Beacon.

Breakfast time was two hours ahead—but who could lie abed while the glories of a spring morning invited one outside ? So by the time I sat down in the dining-room at the French window looking out on to a smooth green lawn, to discuss ham and eggs (delicious ham a quarter of an inch thick !) I had already explored as far as the gates leading to the Abbey ; had seen the Duke of Devonshire's " shooting box " and had had pointed out to me the beginning of the moors where the King sometimes comes to shoot in the fall of the year.

After breakfast I set out for Beamsley Beacon, eager to see the view which I knew the summit must offer. I turned off the main road down a lane to the right, past a farmhouse, and so to a stile made of a single slab of stone. There sat an old tramp with a scraggy, grey beard. His clothes were in tatters, but he gave me a cheery " Good day " as he munched a huge slice of dry bread and sipped his tea from a tin can. I learned he had walked from Skipton, six miles away, that morning. I asked him if I could go by way of the path through the farmyard. " Aye," he said, " ye'll coom to t' main road oop yonder if ye follow t' path."

How musical is this Yorkshire speech in a stranger's ear ! In Sheffield one day I had asked my way and had been told to go by " T'wicker." When I didn't understand what was meant, my informant explained that " The Wicker " was a street. Even then his directions did not " register " at first, so he further explained by saying " T'wicker, where

t'watter goes over t'weir." Which, being interpreted, means "The Wicker where the water goes over the weir!" (The Wicker, by the way, gets its name from the fact that, not so many years ago, "withies" grew down by the river in what is now a busy part of Leeds, and there the natives used to make their wicker baskets.)

So I passed on over the stile and soon came to a cottage where a score or more "tandem" cycles were leaning against the fence. The explanation of these machines came when, a few minutes later, I went down a steep incline to a stream on the banks of which were a dozen white tents. Outside them were men, and in some cases women, too, doing "chores." They had come out from Leeds, Bradford or Keighley to camp in this lovely spot.

Before long I was well away from farmhouses and was slowing up as I began to breast the steep rise of Beamsley Beacon. A farmer came striding down the hill. He was dressed in black leggings and wore a good suit and white collar, it being Sunday morning. At his heel was the inevitable sheep dog. We stopped to pass the time of day, and from William Cockshott, a healthy son of the Yorkshire moors, with deep-lined, well-tanned features, I learned of the hard times sheep farmers were having in these parts. Lambs, it appeared, now fetched only 1s. 4d. (33 cents) a pound, compared with 2s. (50 cents) a year ago; but in this fine pasture they went to 25 pounds or so at ten weeks. Sheep, too, with wool at only 4d. a pound were worth only around 24s. (\$6) compared with 40s. (\$10) a year before; and £4 (\$20) ten years ago. Dairying had been hard hit by imports from Ireland. But there was always compensation in being a tenant of such a landlord as the Duke of Devonshire, to get on whose roll amounted "to being half pensioned for life, as you might say," despite the recent rise in rents.

An hour's hard walking brought me to the top of the Beacon and I was rewarded with a glorious view in all

directions. On one side I looked down into the valley of the Wharfe over Embsay, Addingham and towards Ilkley. Beyond I could see the smoke of Skipton. To the north I could pick out the Inn, the Devonshire Arms, and the thick woods which concealed the Abbey ruins. All about were tiny fields marked off by dark stone walls, as though a giant had taken a huge pencil and scored the landscape across. I sat on the rocks in the silence at the top of Beamsley Beacon and drank in the beauty of it all. Now and then the stillness was broken by the almost-human whistle of a curlew, and occasionally a lark gave tongue so high up in the air that I could not spot him. Otherwise there was no sound, for I learned later that the wise Duke of Devonshire, lord of all this domain, had decreed that there should be no Sunday trains on the branch line from Skipton to disturb the peace of the First Day of the week. Nor, for the matter of that, is there a collection of mail or a stamp to be bought on this day in the village.

As I made my way down the winding road that leads from the summit of Beamsley Beacon towards Bolton Abbey, I passed a lad lying face downwards on a grassy bank beside the road. His bicycle lay beside him as he gazed out over the landscape. The whole glorious valley was bathed in sunshine ; there was the grey-fronted Devonshire Arms nestling in the trees, and the Ilkley Road winding away to the south ; here and there you could catch a peep of the silver streak of the River Wharfe, but the Abbey itself was hidden in the trees to the right.

A book with a green cover lay beside the lad, who looked up as I passed and bade me " good day." Presently, where the hill became too steep to cycle in comfort, he caught me up and we fell into conversation. For half an hour we walked along chatting about this and that—but mostly he talked, and, gradually, I heard about his life and family and work. His story was simple enough—but when I thought about it later I wished that some English movie

man would take just such a story and weave into the picture an aspect of life in Britain which is too often backed out of sight by the endless stream of "west-end drawing-room" comedies and dramas no more representative of England than the gangsters of Chicago are representative of the United States.

It appeared that my young friend was twenty-one and came from Bradford. I took him for seventeen when first I passed him—and his over-youthful looks, it seemed, were one of his handicaps in life. Every Sunday, he told me, he made for the open moors; it was his one joy in life after working forty-eight hours in the week in a wool textile mill. Beyond those forty-eight hours as a packer, he went to night school three nights a week, learning "combing," mercantile arithmetic and the like. And for seven years that had been his life, for he began in the mill at fourteen with a few shillings a week pay.

"It wasn't so easy going to night school, at first," he said, "and it isn't now. You see, me being small and a bit undersized, as you might say, and not looking like a man though I be twenty-one, the bigger lads who are younger than me used to make fun of me. But you see, I missed part of my schooling through having to go to work at nights, because my younger brother being not quite right in the head and all, and we not wanting to send him to a mental home—why I just had to leave school because we needed the money. So I'm behind some of the lads that are younger than me. And now father (he's fifty-nine and a lithographer by trade) has been out of work these six months—and we need the money more than ever. I begin work at seven in the morning and quit at 5.30 and my pay is 26 shillings a week. Sometimes it's a little more when I can find some clearing-up to do after quitting time.

"I read, too," he went on, and produced the green-covered book from his pocket. It was called *Moorland Tramps*, by A. J. Brown. "The others in the factory think

I'm queer because I read—but I don't care. Anyway, through night school and reading a bit, I held my job after I was eighteen when others were put out of work when the time came for them to get more wages."

I asked him whether he didn't get tired of the routine of the factory sometimes and whether he had ever thought of going to Canada. "Yes, I gets fed oop sometimes," he said, "when folks from outside come to look over the factory. Then I wish I could get away from it all, from the noise and monotony—but you see, there's father out of work and young Jim that we are wanting to keep with us—so I just keep on working and come out here on the moors in the summer and read."

Nothing much to his little story on the surface—but underneath, pathos, and a tale of courage and grit of an undersized lad with three adults dependent on him—except for the pittance of the dole for his out-of-work father.

We parted company with a handshake at the fork roads near the inn where one road leads to Skipton and the other to Barden Tower—and I made my way back to the Inn ready for lunch after a seven-mile tramp.

After lunch I spent a lazy hour wandering round the garden and admiring the old prints and fine antique furniture in which the Devonshire Arms abounds. Of the latter I coveted seriously one or more of the half-dozen grandfather and grandmother clocks to be found scattered about in the fine rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett, who run the Inn, know a good piece of furniture when they see it, and from time to time have picked up ancient timepieces which make me break the Tenth Commandment every time I think of them.

Later I wandered along the road, and passing through the gates into the park close alongside the castellated front of Bolton Hall, the Duke of Devonshire's shooting box, I came to the Abbey itself. The nave of it is still used regularly

as a church and it is said that, probably without any interval, divine services have been held in the nave since the foundation of the Abbey in the thirteenth century.

Legends cluster round the ancient fabric—most famous of them being that of “The Boy of Egremond” immortalised in poems by Wordsworth and Rogers. They tell the tale of the tragic death at “The Strid” of the only son of Alicia, widow of Fitz-Duncan, of the royal house of Scotland. The boy, a born hunter, was chasing some beast through the woods and, coming to a narrow gorge, he attempted to leap across. The hound he had in leash hung back and the youth was dragged into the seething torrent and drowned. It was in his memory that his mother founded the Priory of Bolton in one of the most perfect spots in Britain.

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THE MIDLANDS

CHAPTER SIX

I invade the Izaak Walton country—learn more than many anglers know of the master of their craft—and visit Thorpe Cloud, Ashbourne and Uttoxeter.

I. I FEEL like a burglar—a heretic, a violater of sacred mysteries, a brazen interloper—all these rolled into one. Here I am, sitting before a blazing fire in a room which should be the most sacred spot on earth to every true angler. I—who all my life have been bored stiff by fishermen's tales—have penetrated to the holy of holies where Izaak Walton and his bosom friend, Charles Cotton, may have swopped stories about their feats of rod and line.

For this place where I am putting up for the night is the Izaak Walton Inn on Dovedale. I came here, as a matter of fact, rather as an act of penance. You will remember that in a previous chapter I have written something about a real angler at whose home I was entertained in Yorkshire. In my ignorance I insulted him past redemption. I described two poor little fishes which were shown to me, as "perch"—when really they were trout! And I didn't know the difference until the friend who had sponsored me wrote, more in sorrow than in anger, to tell me what I had done. Horrible, horrible!

So, being not more than thirty miles from Dovedale I determined to come here to try to make amends by a pilgrimage to the very shrine of Anglers. It was, indeed, a penitential pilgrimage at first. I had to travel at the imminent risk of breaking my neck over miles of roads and up and down steep hills covered with a thin film of ice. For this

old inn lies at the south end of Dovedale in an utterly lonely spot on the borders of Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

Well here I am—and it's not my fault if the "penance" part of it has gone wrong and, instead, I have been having a thoroughly cosy time, reading books about Izaak Walton, studying the mysteries of angling and looking at catalogues whose pages are illuminated with highly-coloured pictures of pretty, if murderous, flies which rejoice in such fantastic names as Jock Scotts, Red Palmers, Bloody Butchers, Greenwell's Glory—and Heaven knows what beside. One thing is certain as a result of this day's work. If I am not converted into an enthusiastic angler, at least I shall feel henceforth more charitably inclined towards fishermen. For it seems their master—the great Izaak—was a much greater man than ever I had realised—a philosopher—a poet, a writer of fine prose and a man withal with a genius for friendship. His fondness for slaying fish seems to have been a minor fault which an unjust world has made too much of.

So this is the bar parlour, smoke-room, salon of harmless lies—call it what you will—at the Izaak Walton Inn. To this old house, a farmhouse in Walton's day back in the middle sixteenth century, it seems, Walton came often of a summer evening with his friend, Squire Charles Cotton, of Beresford, nearby, to recline at ease in a deep armchair, pulling at his long churchwarden pipe with a tankard of good ale at his side and to talk of men and matters—of politics, religion and what not—with some of whose names are writ large on the page of literary history. For Walton numbered among his cronies half the noted writers, philosophers and divines of his day.

I doubt if this room has changed much in the last half century or more. The ceiling is low, with dark oak beams running across it; there is a seat in the window recess, from which you look out over the valley towards Thorpe Cloud, the tiny hamlet nestling among the trees down

below. If the window were open you could hear the murmur of the Dove at the foot of the bare hill on which the Inn stands. There are two or three deep-seated armchairs ; on the walls are pictures of groups of anglers who have gathered here in this room and discussed the merits of their catch—the lovely complexion, fat and beautiful condition, the length, breadth, height and weight of the fishes they have slain. In the corner, opposite the blazing fire, an old grandfather clock ticks solemnly ; on the other side of the room are shelves loaded with bottles and, below them, those queer, brightly-polished levers and taps which are inseparable from any self-respecting bar parlour. In short it is a soothing, cosy room—a room in which any thought of the irritations and worries of this mad world would seem out of place. Prominently beside the mantelshelf hangs a couplet which is, so to speak, the Charter of Rights of Anglers the world over. I am quoting from memory, but here, at least, is the gist of what it says :

Lord give me grace that even I
May catch so fine and fat a fish
That there will be no need to lie
To gratify my wildest wish

And underneath, this frank confession :

Hullo, what's this, what's this ;
No wish to lie about a fish ?
Why man 'twould spoil 'bout half the sport
To give no more than true report !

This being the " off " season for anglers, it happens that I am the only guest staying here, so you see I have had ample time to look about me. I wandered into the drawing-room and studied the visitor's book—of which I will tell you later ; I admired a stuffed fish of large proportions—surely a trout !—which stared at me with pained expression from

a glass case ; I touched, gingerly, some tapering rods in a corner of the hall—and I have asked any number of foolish questions of Miss Bird, the manageress, who has ministered to my comfort and even seen to it that my bed shall have two hot water bottles. In the course of my peregrinations about the house, I collected half a dozen books about Old Izaak Walton and his beloved Dovedale. At this moment they are piled up beside me while I struggle manfully against the desire to snooze. But I think I ought to pass on to you just a modicum of what I have learned.

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2. It is a thousand pities there were no such things as cameras in the days of Izaak Walton. When I had studied all the groups of anglers which hang round the walls of this snug room in the inn, I came at last to two old engravings above the fireplace. On the left is Izaak Walton himself, and alongside him his friend, Charles Cotton. They are shown wearing periwigs, tied with black ribbon in the custom of the time, and at their throats are lace ruffles sticking out from under their high-collared coats.

I've been wondering, in a stupid, sleepy sort of way, whether they wore this get-up when they went roaming rod in hand, along the banks of the Dove, the Derwent, Manifold, the Churnet and Lathgil, and all the other fishing streams hereabouts. I wonder if they kept those uncomfortable looking wigs on their heads when they stretched themselves at ease here when the day's sport was over ? It's of no consequence, of course—except that I cannot picture the so-dignified Izaak spouting poetry or discussing the religious controversies of the time without his periwig. On the other hand, could a man spend a whole evening telling fishing yarns and drinking potent ale without his wig getting pushed awry—and how could a man maintain his full dignity with a cock-eyed periwig over his left eye ?

Not that Izaak Walton was a drinking man—far from it. He was, indeed, a deeply religious man—a “God-intoxicated man” one writes—but no teetotaller. Listen to him—“Come hostess, dress it (a trout) presently and get us what other meat the house will afford, and give us some of your best barley-wine and good liquor that our forefathers did use to drink of; the drink which preserved their health, and made them live so long and do so many good deeds.”

What a strange couple they were—Walton and Cotton! Walton, you know, was the son of a Fleet Street draper—a man of the people in days when class distinctions counted for more than they do to-day—while Charles Cotton was of the landed gentry, a squire and the son of the squire of Beresford Hall. What a difference, too, in their ages. Walton was born in 1593, while Cotton was thirty-seven years younger. Yet Cotton wrote of his friend, who became his “adopted father,” that “he was the truest friend man ever had—my father, friend and tutor all in one.” And yet this son of the London draper numbered among his friends such a scholar as the great Dr. Johnson, Archbishop Sheldon of Canterbury, Congreve, the playwright, and scores of other outstanding men of the time. And when he died at the great age of ninety, they put up a statue to his memory in Winchester cathedral.

A few miles from the Izaak Walton Inn, up Dovedale, there still stands in the grounds of what was Cotton’s estate, the Beresford Fishing House, over the portal of which is the Latin motto ‘*Piscatoribus Sacrum*’ (Sacred to fishermen) and below is the monogram made from the entwined initials ‘I W’ and ‘C C.’ The little square stone cottage with a high, peaked roof stands close beside the waters of Dovedale. There these two had planned to spend their fishing holidays—but, sadly, Walton never saw the cottage for he died before it was completed.

Their passionate love of the beauties of Dovedale was as strong a bond as the love of angling itself. It was Cotton,

himself no mean poet, who wrote in a burst of enthusiasm for his beloved Dovedale.

Good God, how sweet are all things here,
How beautiful the trees appear.

And once in rapture he wrote :—

Oh my beloved Nymph ! Fair Dove,
Princess of Rivers, how I love
Upon thy flowing banks to lie,
And view thy silver stream,
When gilded by a summer's beam
And in it all thy wanton fry
 Playing at Liberty ;
And with an angle upon them,
 The All of Treachery,
I ever learned to practise and to try !

Walton's fame as writer will live in the pages of his *Compleat Angler*, of course—and his other works, his "Lives" of Donne, Wotton and Hooker, may be forgotten in the charm of those immortal conversations between Viator (Walton himself) and Piscator (Cotton.)

Forgive me if I have bored you with too much talk of the literary gifts of the High Priest of Anglers and his friend Charles Cotton—but you must remember that mine was a mission of penance to this hallowed spot and that, as a duty, I feel bound to pass on some of the knowledge I have gained.

Anyway I didn't intend to go to bed until Bob Evans, the proprietor of the Inn, had come home from Uttoxeter market—for there's a farm of 300 acres here and, if truth be told, I believe Bob Evans is more interested in farming than in running an inn !

* * * * *

3. It was after ten o'clock when I heard the sound of a car driving into the yard of the Inn and knew that Bob

Evans, the landlord, must be home. I had been getting anxious as bedtime approached—for I had to leave next morning and felt that my picture of this homey place would be incomplete until I had met him.

There was another reason for my wanting to meet Bob Evans. In one of the books I had been reading, I had come across some delightful sketches of Dovedale by an angler who had spent happy days here some thirty-odd years ago. In one of them there was a reference to "Master Bobbie," the small son of the landlord of the Izaak Walton—and I knew that the "Master Bobbie" of 1898 was Mr. Landlord Evans of 1933.

For half an hour or so, therefore, we sat over the fire and talked of Dovedale; of the visitors who come to the Inn year after year to enjoy not only the fishing, but the good-fellowship of this comfy hostelry. We talked, too, of farming, of the price of sheep, pigs and cattle; of the foot-and-mouth disease epidemic which had cut them off temporarily from Ashbourne market. The Izaak Walton, you see, lies just on the Staffordshire side of the Dove, which is the boundary between that county and Derbyshire, and the latter was quarantined at the time. I learned about some of the famous spots of Dovedale—Pickering Tor, Ilam Rock and Tissington spires, those lofty crags which rise up sheer from the water's edge farther up the dale. I knew that the time I had for walking in the morning would not allow me to penetrate far up the valley, but the story of the district fascinated me, no less than its connection with Izaak Walton.

Who would not become attached to a district where such picturesque names and legends abound. "Reynard's Cave" and "Grey Mare's stable," a dark cavern beside the dale, where, they say, an old woman hermit lived alone for many years. Small wonder that Dovedale has drawn to it so many famous writers and lovers of beauty. It was in the grounds of Ilam Hall that William Congreve, the great eighteenth

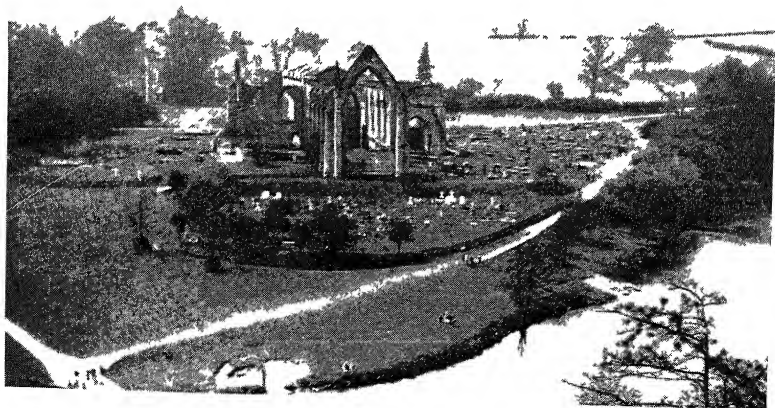
century playwright, when a young man, wrote *The Old Bachelor*; George Eliot had Dovedale in mind when she wrote of "Eagledale" in *Adam Bede*. Byron came here too; so did Rousseau, and Handel and Mark Twain, who called it "the world's divinest dale." All of them fell under the spell of this silent land of bleak moors and wooded valleys, of picturesque grey stone villages linked with England's earliest history. "Europe does not yield another picture so sweet in sylvan beauty," wrote one of them, "or so changeful in its fairy-like combination of wood and rock and water as the Dove. Its minuteness is its charm. It is a glen diversified with clefts and dingles, wooded hollows and towering heights."

It was not difficult to understand Bob Evans' attachment to a land so lovely, so unlike any other part of England. Nor was it hard to understand why in those group pictures on the walls one could pick out the same visiting anglers year after year. Some of them you could spot first, back in the early '90's, wearing the fore and aft "deer-stalker" caps of the time, with heavy moustaches and side-whiskers decorating their faces—and years later, grown older, they were to be seen in more modern garb and minus their facial adornments.

The visitor's book of the inn tells the same story. Names appear again and again. This book, by the way, is one to have in mind next time an ardent angler tells you a tall yarn about that fish which just got away from him. There is damning evidence here that anglers don't believe the tales told them even by their closest friends. Take this entry in the book by some sarcastic wit, dated July 31, 1914. The name is "The Rev. Veritas Simpleman, Greening Vicarage, West Greenstead." This is his comment in the margin, "I have read the records of catches in this book and am led to think that my brother anglers must have frequently exaggerated their success. I have fished in both rivers (the Dove and Manifold) for nearly three weeks and



THE ISAAK WALTON INN, ON DOVEDALE



BOLTON ABBEY.

have only caught one sizeable fish of $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches, though my parishioners account me a good dry fly angler."

Some visitors, however, appear to be more interested in the food than the fishing, for a Mr. Campbell and family, of Chicago, had no comment to make on the sport, but wrote in large letters "Cream and horseradish sauce—GREAT."

I wished I had more time to explore the glories of Dove-dale and the neighbourhood than a few hours' early tramp next morning allowed me. I wanted so much to make the ten-mile walk up the dale to Beresford Hall, to see the Fishermen's House. I wanted to explore the hamlet of Thorpe Cloud and to see Ilam Hall. It seemed wicked to pass through Ashbourne with only a brief stop to visit the magnificent church. Some day I shall go back there and put up at "The Green Man and Black's Head," whose sign-board hangs clear across the street. I shall hope to be there on Shrove Tuesday to witness the strangest annual football match in Christendom. On that day for centuries past the "upwards" and the "downards" have fought out their battle for three miles along the village streets from Sturston to Clifton mill, whose old water wheels provide one goal. The "upwards" and "downards" respectively are natives of the town born north or south of a certain line. Through the streets of shuttered shops the contest rages, sometimes crossing Henmore brook which cuts across the "ground." A great sight it must be.

Then Uttoxeter—a shame not to spend more time pottering about its ancient streets and market-place. Here it was that the great Dr. Johnson came in his old age to do penance before the site where his father's bookstall had once stood on market-days. Fifty years before, Dr. Johnson had refused, out of false pride, the request of his father to take charge of the bookstall one market-day, the father being ill. But at length the great man came back to Uttoxeter to stand in the market-place for one whole hour on a wet day,

exposed to the jeers of the bystanders, in contrition for his worldly pride.

From this unique world of beauty of which Dovedale is the centre, I drove away, my mind stored with happy memories and refreshed by contact with an age when men had time to "roam the banks of rivers rod in hand"; when London was three days' journey distant by stage coach; when the simple joys of the English countryside were sufficient background for good sport, good talk and good friendship.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I set out for Pershore—but am lured from my purpose by the charms of Evesham—and visit nine churches in twenty-four hours—not to mention lunch at Bredon Vicarage.

1. THE fates conspired to make me change my plans and to stay the night at Evesham. I was really bound for Pershore, a village seven miles farther on towards Worcester. Not that it really mattered where I stayed ; I had chosen Pershore as a destination merely because I had heard of it as a lovely village in the Vale of Evesham. I was free for thirty-six hours to wander where I liked, to indulge my passion for exploring remote villages, or to dig a little into the fascinating history of such old towns as Evesham and Tewkesbury. All I had to remember was that I must be in Birmingham early on Monday morning.

It happened that I reached the bustling market square of Evesham, cold and ravenously hungry, about lunch time on Saturday. The sun was shining brightly, despite the cold ; I liked the look of the place—and began to weaken in my resolve to push on, the moment I caught sight of the fascinating glimpse of Abbot Reginald's Gateway leading to the old Abbey grounds. Furthermore, Evesham seemed remarkably pleased to see me, from the attendant in the car park to the policeman who directed me on my way. Finally I fell in love at first acquaintance with "The Crown Hotel"—and when Mrs. Williams, the landlord's wife, had shown me over the Inn and had told me I could have possession for the night of a vast chamber whose windows looked out across the sloping fields to the

River Avon and the battlefield where Simon de Montfort was slain 668 years ago, I could not possibly resist the temptation to make this delightful place my temporary headquarters.

I shall remember this week-end for a variety of reasons—among them the fact that I achieved a record, even for such a hardened explorer of village churches as I am, by visiting nine of them in twenty-four hours. These visits, however, were only incidents in a brief period crowded with interesting trivialities, as you shall hear.

“The Crown Hotel” is what the guide-books call “a comfortable and commodious hostelry”—and it is all and more than that. It is an Inn in the best sense of the term—a place where, from landlord to “boots,” and landlord’s wife to barmaid, everyone’s job is to make the wayfarer feel at home.

As I lunched in a picturesque room hung with old prints, with an oak sideboard loaded with good pieces of old china, I got up between courses to look out from the big bay window across the garden to the fields beyond and to the point where the Avon passes under the bridge. The waitress chatted cheerily with me, when she was not calling directions for my wants down the buttery-hatch “lift” which communicated with the kitchen below. She told me of the lovely gardens at Pembury, in Kent, where she had been previously with her present master and mistress. And later the barmaid talked brightly of Pershore, where her home was, between times pulling at those mysterious levers behind the bar which cause good ale to flow frothing into pewter tankards. The townsfolk, too, and the farmers who dropped in for a pint o’ bitter or “’arf and ’arf,” soon drew even a stranger into the general conversation.

Then came Mrs. Williams, the landlord’s wife—a charming native of Clichy, near Paris—to ask if I would like to see over the hotel. It happened that I could have the choice of any one of half a dozen fine bedrooms—but, as I



ABBOT REGINALD'S GATEWAY, EVESHAM



BELL TOWER, EVESHAM ABBEY

[Facing p 85.

have told you, despite the bitter cold, I chose a great baronial room which, when I stepped it out, I found to measure 25 feet by 27—with a ceiling high in proportion.

When we came down to the hall again, Mrs. Williams told me of the well which had been discovered two years ago under the hall floor. She switched on a light and, through a grating, I looked down sixty feet to the surface of the water which is thirty-six feet deep. The well, almost certainly the source of supply for the Abbey centuries ago (for the Inn backs right on to the old buildings) is lined with the original brick and lighted down to the water's edge. Half way down the brick wall there has been found a secret passage leading, presumably, underground to the central point of the old Abbey. Incidentally, Captain Williams told me, the water has medicinal properties so we may some day hear of Evesham becoming known as a "spa."

My abode for the night being settled, and being primed already with some knowledge of local history, I set forth to explore.

There are many historic things to interest one in Evesham. There are the two fine churches of St. Laurence and All Saints' only fifty yards apart in one churchyard—one of them the church of the old monks ages ago, and the other for pilgrims. There is the central Bell Tower which stands alone in splendid isolation at what was once the centre of the rich Abbey's extensive buildings; there are fine timbered houses like the "Round House," known to have been standing in the early sixteenth century; the Almonry and the old Abbey Gatehouse; there are sufficient remains of the Abbey walls, built by William de Chryton in 1320, to show the extent and imposing strength of the ancient defences. On Merstow Green there is an old house which formerly was "The Free Grammar School of Prince Henry of Evesham" as it was styled in the Incorporation granted to the town by his father, James I, in 1605.

But most of all one's mind wanders back to the great drama of Simon de Montfort, the final scenes of which were enacted within the vast stone buildings which once housed the monks of Evesham, and in the meadows within sight of that baronial chamber where I slept so soundly.

In the darkness of my room, while the huge wardrobe was dimly outlined in the glow of the fire, I lay and tried to picture the brave scene when de Montfort had arrived at the Abbey gates on that summer evening of 1265. With him came a great company of knights and men at arms, and among the host, King Henry III, a hostage placed in de Montfort's hands after the battle of Lewes fifteen months earlier.

That night precious hours were lost by de Montfort in "hearing Mass and dining" when, had he known of the massing of the Royalists armies in his front and rear, he might have made good his escape from the trap.

Early next morning, the story goes, the earl's barber ascended the central tower of the Abbey and saw a great army bearing friendly standards in the van coming over the hill on the north of the town. At first, deceived by the standards, de Montfort believed it to be the army of his son, but too late the attackers' strategem was realised and it was discovered that the standards were captured ones carried by prisoners forced to march ahead of the attacking forces.

There followed a bloody battle in which, the historian notes, the great Earl fought "like a giant for the liberties of England." No quarter was asked or given. De Montfort's horse was shot under him and, fighting desperately on foot, he fell dead with a score of wounds piercing his body, at a spot marked with a memorial shaft and still known as Battle Well. If Evesham had no other claim to a place in England's history—and it has many—the fact that it was the

scene of Simon de Montfort's last epic fight would be sufficient to ensure its place in the story of these islands.

* * * * *

2. Before I went to bed, I sat by the fire in the bar parlour of The "Crown" at Evesham gossiping with Captain Williams, telling him of my afternoon's wanderings about the countryside and planning the expedition I was to make next day.

We talked of Evesham's history, of the comparative prosperity of the fruit-growers and market gardeners of the district, of the war and of politics and what not. I found that the landlord had not been many years in his present calling. I asked him what was his work before he took up hotel-keeping.

"You'd never guess," he said. "I belonged to a profession of which there are only four of the kind in England and will never be more than that number." That was a poser which stumped me. Captain Williams explained that he, as his father before him, had been deputy assay master of the Chester mint. With London, Birmingham and Sheffield, Chester still retains the ancient privilege of "hall marking" gold and silver, and in this unusual calling the landlord of The Crown Hotel had been engaged for years. The war, of course, had found him other, more strenuous, work to attend to in France, where for a period he was second-in-command of his battalion. For my part I would rather be landlord of an old country inn of good repute than tackle many other jobs—and The Crown at Evesham would suit me almost as well as any.

But now for the tale of my wanderings on Saturday afternoon. . . . I took the main Worcester road to Pershore, determined to check over that village even if I was not to stay there. Pershore, you know, is the centre of one of the finest fruit and market-gardening districts in England. In the woods near the village the famous Pershore

Egg plum was first found growing wild. The land all round is more intensively cultivated than any I have seen in England. There are miles of orchards, with vegetables grown between the trees, and in springtime, I was told, what with the fruit tree blossoms and thousands of daffodils and narcissi, the countryside is a sight to remember.

The great square tower of the Abbey is the dominating feature of the village, and to it I made my way. Although all except what remains now as the parish church was destroyed at the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry VIII's time, the Norman transept and the very beautiful early English chancel are worth going far to see. The mighty tower itself was built in the fourteenth century. I wandered round the old building revelling in the peaceful stillness of the place. In the Abbey porch I found the usual list of "Our people overseas," and among them were many who have made new homes in Canada. I can imagine that their thoughts often turn to the restful beauty of this lovely village. Here are their names: Sidney Champken, Vancouver; Frederic Charlewood, Toronto; Edmund George, Alberta; Samuel and Jane James and family, Saskatchewan; John Stanley Nytton, Alberta; Nellie Pitt, Vancouver; Herbert, Gertrude and Albert Playdon, Calgary; Charles George Smith, Montreal; Harold Bruce Hitchin, Richersville, Alberta; George, James and Eliza Dolphin, Ontario; Gordon Patterson Urquhart, Milton, Ont.; Harry, Ethel, Noel, Leslie, Selwyn and Wilfred Drury, King's County, Nova Scotia.

I made my way back towards Evesham by narrow lanes and little frequented byways. I stopped at a sharp corner in the road to admire a group of half-timbered cottages on a hillside, and enquired from a passer-by the name of the village. It was Cropthorne—and if there is a more picturesque village than this I have yet to come across it. The one street of the place climbs up a fairly steep hill and while on one side are old cottages flush with the roadway, on the

other are several fine private houses and the gates of the driveway to the Manor House.

Of course I found my way to the church. But I am afraid my interest in the Norman stonework and the portion of an ancient cross which the sexton pointed out to me, was eclipsed by a framed photograph which hung in the porch. It showed the tiny wooden church of St. Michael at McCreary, Manitoba. Now what in the world was the connection between this old village and the little town in Manitoba? My investigations led me to one of the beautiful old houses fronting on the village main street where lived a Mrs. Holland. She, I was told, had been in Canada and had interested herself in McCreary.

So about 3.30 I presented myself at the front door of Mrs. Holland's house. She was out, but as the maid assured me she would return for tea, I gave her my card and asked if I might wait. I made myself comfortable, as I was bidden, and sat in a cosy room reading some of Dean Inge's "Lay sermons." Time slipped by with no sign of the lady of the house. But I was determined to discover the reason of Mrs. Holland's interest in McCreary, Man.—so there I sat stolidly, until the daylight was dying and I could no longer see to read. I am afraid I actually dozed—for the next thing I remember was hearing someone, who I presumed to be Mrs. Holland, open the front door and then footsteps coming direct to the room where I sat. It dawned on me that the maid could have had no chance to give my card to Mrs. Holland or to explain the presence of a stranger from Canada.

Therefore I could easily understand her astonishment when she opened the door of the room to find a strange man, only about half awake, stammering an explanation that he came from Canada and wanted, if he might, to question her about McCreary. Later, I hope, my mysterious arrival was fully explained—but the situation was decidedly awkward for the moment.

Over the teacups, however, I found that Mrs. Holland was one of those gallant ladies who make journeys to distant parts of the empire in the interests of the Church of England. She had accompanied Miss Eva Hasell some years ago in her "Sunday School van" through western Canada and, in the course of her wanderings, had come to McCreary. There she had discovered a Mr. and Mrs. Collins and a Mr. and Mrs. Birch who, long years before, had gone out to Canada from Cropthorne. This link once forged, Mrs. Holland had helped very greatly toward establishing the church at McCreary. Incidentally—though Mrs. Holland indeed made no boast of her work—she had done extremely valuable service in collecting funds for the diocese of Brandon.

I was shown a book full on interesting snapshots of the western provinces—including one of the one-time residents of Cropthorne who now live at McCreary, and for long we sat over the fire and talked of bishops, priests and deacons and their work on the far-away prairies. I left with many apologies for my intrusion—as yet, I felt, not adequately explained, thinking to myself how strange it had been to sit in this beautiful home in a tiny Worcestershire village discussing the affairs of people 5,000 miles away.

* * * * *

3. I boasted that I had visited nine churches in twenty-four hours during my stay in the Vale of Evesham—and the time has come to make good my boast.

Right after breakfast on Sunday morning I set out from The Crown Hotel at Evesham, determined to drive as far as Elmley Castle village; to leave the car there and walk to the summit of Bredon Hill. For various reasons I never achieved my object. In the first place I found myself at Little Comberton, a village almost under the shadow of Bredon Hill. I had missed the turning to Elmley Castle. I don't know that there is anything very remarkable about

Little Comberton, except some fine old half-timbered cottages—but here was the first church I visited that day. Next I came to Great Comberton—which seemed to me just as “little” as its neighbour. Here was church Number Two—much the same in character as the first one—beautiful, old and perfectly kept.

Now I made my way slowly along winding lanes towards Eckington—but on the way an interruption to my journey occurred when I espied two elderly men and one young one gossiping over a gate leading to a scrap iron yard. The two older men proved to be Frank Crump—who, by the way, I found, had a brother living in Hamilton, Ont.—and John Packwood. We chatted about old iron, and the huge stones I saw lying around which are used for under-pinning hay ricks, and farming and the world in general. John Packwood noticed that my car carried a “G B” plate at the rear, showing it had been abroad, so I was drawn to tell them something of my recent long journey of 3,000 miles through Europe. In turn John allowed he had a pony behind which he himself had travelled 3,000 miles, all about the Vale of Evesham—and he thought (rightly) that his pony cost less as a means of transport than my old car. Presently John said, “So you’re from Canada, mister; well that’s where I should have gone thirty-seven years ago if my pal hadn’t backed out at the last minute.” Under present conditions, and considering John’s white hairs, I could not recommend him to consider emigrating now.

I asked the way to Bredon village—and Frank Crump told me to turn to the right ‘oop the bank’—which I interpreted as meaning “up the hill.”

So my next port of call was Bredon village. By this time the bells were calling the villagers to church and, despite my hob-nail boots and rough tramping clothes, I determined to go to morning service. I thought it would be nice to hear a simple village sermon.

I joined the villagers going into the church and, before

I took my seat, walked up the aisle and watched the bell-ringer manipulating his five ropes with amazing speed and skill. Then I took a modest seat at the back of the church and was prepared to do my share of lusty singing when the choir got into action, and later listen to words of wisdom from the pulpit. But to my disappointment, the parson got up and the first thing he said was 'As there will be no sermon this morning we will sing Hymn number so-and-so.' I decided there and then to evacuate the position under cover of the singing of the opening hymn and to continue my explorations in the neighbourhood. My nailed boots, unfortunately, drew an uncomfortable amount of attention to my exit, and then at the door I almost collided with a lady in a brown tweed costume who was coming in a little late.

I had seen enough of Bredon church, however, to make me want to have another look round, so an hour later when I had visited the fine old Tythe barn not far away, where long centuries ago the tenth-part of the farmers' produce was stored as part of the church's income, I returned to the church. Now the villagers were leaving as I pottered about among the monuments.

An aged man—the verger or a sidesman, I thought—seeing that I was interested in the church, took me in tow and directed my attention to a vast, heavily ornamented tomb of some long departed local notability whose progeny of sons and daughters, graded as to age, were shown in kneeling effigies on either side of their parents. Then he took me into the chancel. "This," he said, "be the organ—all electric 'e be now," he added proudly. "I blowed 'im for twenty-three years before 'e was made electric." "You must miss the job after all those years," I said. "Aye—but there be some misses that be good misses," said the old man.

Just then the parson came out of the vestry and with the friendliness that seems characteristic of these parts, came



BREDON PARISH CHURCH



THE VICARAGE, BREDON

forward to talk to me. He showed me the pride of his church—the large number of glazed tiles with armorial bearings on them some of which, it is believed, date from the time of the Crusades. They make an effective showing worked in as part of the steps to the altar, and the key plan hanging on the wall adds to their interest.

But the vicar interested me more—for in two minutes' conversation he discovered that I came from Canada; while I learned that he had been in the Dominion also and had, in fact, acted as Chaplain on H.M.S. *Drake* when she was convoying troops and supplies across the Atlantic. Furthermore, for his pains he had been torpedoed off Ratlin Island, off the north of Ireland.

The upshot of that conversation was that I was invited to lunch at the Vicarage—old clothes and all. The Vicarage, I must tell you, is an old stone mansion close to the church. Its smooth lawns sweep down to the Avon at the back of the house, and its windows look out across green fields and woods to distant rolling hills. (If I were a parson I should pull strings with all the bishops I could make contact with to get myself appointed Vicar of Bredon, as soon as my friend Rev. W. H. B. Yerburch vacates the job. Just as well for the parishioners that I am not a parson!)

At lunch I found myself sitting next to the lady in the brown tweed costume who, unfortunately, had observed me beating a retreat in the middle of the first hymn. She proved to be the vicar's sister. Of course we found mutual friends in Canada—for both Mr. and Mrs. Yerburch had travelled in the Dominion and in the United States. We talked of all sorts of things—of politics and Russia and most of all of the Oxford Group Movement of which the Vicar was an enthusiastic member.

I left that hospitable vicarage feeling that whatever its critics may say of the Oxford Group Movement, at any rate among its members are people who regard all men as

brothers—even if they wear heavy, hob-nail boots and disreputable old clothes.

Tewkesbury Abbey was the last church I visited that memorable day—and to prove my point about the nine churches I visited in twenty-four hours, here they are: All Saints' and St. Laurence at Evesham; Pershore Abbey, Little and Great Comberton, Eckington, Bredon, Cropthorne and Tewkesbury Abbey.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I find myself one of three cranks at a Lichfield hotel—visit the cathedral and envy the lot of some extremely aged canons—then Market Harborough and the hunting folk of “the Shires” lure me.

1. SOMETIMES I think that if ever I retire I should like to run a country inn in England—like “The Crown” at Evesham, or the “Dorset Arms” at East Grinstead. Then again, there are times when I feel sure the experiment would end in my appearance in the dock on a charge of murdering one of my “guests.”

For example—I am at Lichfield—a restful old Cathedral town in the Midlands. It is a very cold winter’s day. Automobilists are few and far between; “commercial” have mostly gone home, as it is near the end of the week. The landlord might reasonably expect to be practically empty on such a night. Three travellers, including myself, have “blown in” after 6 o’clock. Now we are in the dining-room.

“Take this so-called soup away. I don’t like it at all!” says the man at the next table to me in an angry voice.

On the menu it is euphemistically described as “gravy soup.” It consists, apparently, of diluted grease from the pot in which the rest of the dinner was cooked. I had managed to swallow mine, but, although I disliked his surly manner, I must say I sympathised with the individual

in brown suede shoes and "Norfolk" jacket who complained so loudly.

The waitress smiles unresentfully at him and says politely, "Yes, sir, certainly, sir—can I get you any other kind of soup instead,"—just as though there was a choice of mock turtle, cream of tomato or celery. Fortunately he grunts that he won't have any soup after this sample.

A moment later my alleged "braised chicken" arrived on the scene. There was a minute portion of a scraggy wing in a sea of greasy gravy—first cousin to the "gravy soup." Emboldened by my next-door neighbour's example, I called the waitress.

"Look here," I said, mildly but firmly, "there are only three people staying in this hotel, so I don't see why I can't have a small piece of the white meat instead of this scraggy bone." "Yes, sir; certainly, sir," said the wench with such a friendly smile that I felt like a brute for complaining.

No sooner had she brought me a somewhat better piece of the bird, than the latest arrival—a commercial traveller I took him to be—said in a loud voice—"Here, miss, this place is like an ice-vault. Make up the fire—and sharp about it." "Yes, sir; certainly, sir," said the unfortunate girl with another disarming smile—and she ran off to get some more coal.

Then take that nice girl in the office. She handed me the key of room Number 32. I said, "Are you sure the bed is properly aired?" It's true I was only taking precautions dictated by experience—but if I were a landlord, and a "guest" had the nerve to ask such a thing in a tone that implied my beds were damp—well, I think the ambulance would have to be sent for! As it happened, the bed was soft and warm—and, except for the dinner, the hotel afforded ample comfort for any reasonable way-farer.

But one must not judge the dear old city of Lichfield by the gloom dispensed by three cranky guests stranded in a local hotel at the end of a wintry week in February. We must regard them rather as "patients" whose nerve troubles may be set right after a few hours in the peaceful atmosphere of this delightful old place.

I slept soundly and by 10 o'clock was walking abroad on a crisp, frosty morning. Naturally my steps turned in the direction of the cathedral—not merely from an interest in things ecclesiastical, but because Lichfield Cathedral is one of the most perfectly satisfying man-made things in existence. I intended to walk through the cathedral before morning service began at 10.30 and later to admire the grace and beauty of the triple spires from all angles.

But there was an obstacle to my plan which I had overlooked. As I left the hotel I suddenly remembered that it was here in Lichfield, when passing this way some time before, that I had seen, in the window of an antique dealer's shop, a heavy pewter dish which I coveted. There was the shop, just across the street—and there, was the dish still in the window. I almost yielded to temptation when I had asked the price—but this was no time for such luxuries—and I tore myself away in time.

I stopped to admire the finest view of the cathedral at the point where the main street comes to an end and where, beside one of the large pools which are such an attractive feature of Lichfield, the citizens have made their beautiful "Garden of Remembrance" in memory of the men of the town who died in the war. From this point the view is exquisite. In the slow process of time the grouping of the picturesque old houses in the precincts in the middle-distance, the background of the mellow-toned spires of the cathedral, the reflections cast on the unruffled surface of the nearby pool—all these have formed themselves into a vista of loveliness which could

not have been contrived by any plan executed as a whole.

When I reached the cathedral it was nearly time for service and I could only walk hurriedly through the nave. At the west end of it I sat down beside the man who was pulling the bell-rope. The great building was practically empty—the bell-ringer and myself, a vergers here and there and choirmen and boys straggling in just in time for service—that was all. As we chatted, a door at the far side of the nave opened creakily and in came an incredibly aged canon, a black cloak over his white surplice. Walking with a stick, and preceded by a vergers carrying a silver-headed mace, the old man stumped bravely along. The bell-ringer said he was eighty-four and that if I waited a minute I should see one still older come in. I moved across the nave and watched the old canon with his stick hobble down the long transept, the sound of his footsteps and the click of his stick on the stone floor growing fainter as he passed through a doorway to the vestry. Then, sure enough, the door opened again, and in came the still older canon—eighty-seven the bell-ringer said he was.

The organ began to play softly; from somewhere in the distance I heard the echo of a prayer and an "Amen"; then measured footsteps, and the procession came in sight—eight or ten choirboys, half a dozen "lay clerks" and at the last the two old canons led by their mace-bearers. As far as I could see, I was the whole congregation—and even I had to leave almost as soon as a quavery voice had begun intoning "Dearly beloved . . ."

But what an oasis of perfect peace. Quiet, orderly reverence; the bell ringing softly for ten minutes twice daily, winter and summer, decade after decade; service beginning precisely at the same moment with unfailing punctuality; vergers moving softly here and there in their black gowns, knowing the exact moment when to go forward with their little silver-tipped maces to lead their canons

to lectern or pulpit ; that old creaky door opening at the same time every day to admit successive generations of canons who inhabit those solid, comfortable houses the windows of which look out on to the smooth lawns of the precincts and who know, with reasonable certainty that, when they come to pass away, their memories will be kept more or less green by a tablet within the splendid building which they have served.

* * * * *

2. Whenever I find myself pottering about a cathedral town in England, I regret that I have not the courage to go and ring the bell at the Deanery and say to the butler, "Please tell the dean there is a man here from Canada who would like very much to speak to him." All I should want with the dean would be to see, for my own satisfaction, how he seemed to fit into the picture, and to hear from his own lips that he realised the enormous responsibility of his job. Even if he didn't fit at all in my humble view—I should not expect King George or the Archbishop of Canterbury to remove him summarily from office—but it might give me the additional pleasure of feeling that his cathedral was in safe keeping.

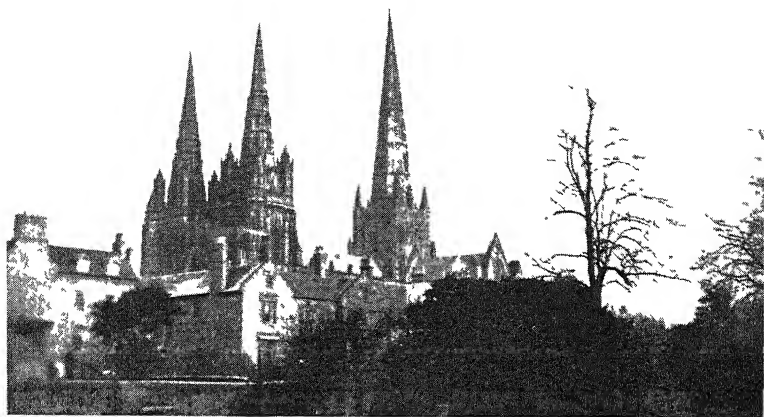
I knew already that Lichfield cathedral was in good hands, but some such thoughts were passing through my mind as I walked away from the Close. I stopped near the Garden of Remembrance to find the best place on the stone balustrade from which to take a photograph. Just then I saw a parson coming towards me. He looked important—or imposing—and I summed him up at once as a member of the Chapter. I decided to speak to him. Failing the dean, I thought I might, perhaps, judge from one of his colleagues how deep was the affection and respect of the cathedral body for the priceless shrine of beauty temporarily entrusted to them.

It always seems to me that however magnificent a

cathedral may be in itself, its tone and atmosphere may change according to the outlook of succeeding generations of deans and chapters. One or two English cathedrals have suffered, perhaps, from deans who, with the desire to make their cathedrals up-to-date, have tended to sacrifice something of their dignity and restfulness. In this digression I have in mind in particular Canterbury, where, under a former dean, the glorious beauty of the nave was marred for a time by hideous loud-speaker boxes suspended on wires from pillar to pillar. The shadowy mystery into which, when darkness had fallen, the massive arches used to melt, was destroyed by brilliant lights at the apex of the roof; an altar, out of keeping with the mellowed grey stone all around, was placed at the foot of the steps leading to the choir. Much better let the congregation go to sleep in the sermon than destroy the architectural glories of the place by the presence of ugly machines designed to keep people awake.

But let us return to the dignitary whose progress I designed to arrest. . . .

By way of introduction I asked him some inane question about the history of Lichfield cathedral. From the button on the front of his clerical hat, I guessed he must hold an office of some sort above the common run of parson. I found I was right, for he told me he was the Chancellor of the diocese—and in a moment showed his eagerness to transfer, even to a stranger, some of his own enthusiasm for his beloved cathedral. I listened appreciatively while he sketched for me an outline of the early history of the cathedral—I learned how the present building had been founded in the early thirteenth century, replacing a former Norman church and, problematically, a still earlier Saxon one. He told me enough of the cathedral's vicissitudes in the Civil War to make me go later and read up the story of the three sieges laid to the fortified Close during the struggle between Cromwell and Charles I. Royalists



"THE LADIES OF THE VALE"—THE TRIPLE SPIRES OF LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL.



"THE ROUND HOUSE," EVESHAM.

[Facing p. 101.]

at first garrisoned it against the Parliamentary leader, Lord Brooke, who was determined to raze the cathedral to the ground. Brooke himself was shot while leaning from a window watching the struggle, but the defenders were forced to surrender to the Roundheads. Thereafter the cathedral was pillaged, the central tower fell and, as one historian records, "every day the Roundheads hunted a cat with hounds through the church." Later Prince Rupert recaptured the town for the Royalists and held it until the restoration—but the misguided zealots of Cromwell's army did untold damage during their occupation.

I learned of the finds that had been made in the Chancellor's own garden in the Close. A font and a bishop's stone stool, apparently of Saxon origin, had been found which tended to confirm the theory of a cathedral church on the present site long before Norman days. To you or me, perhaps, it might not seem of vast importance whether a crumbling piece of stonework, found beneath a lawn, was part of a one-time cathedral or not—but to an archæologist or historian in any English cathedral town of proper self-respect, such a discovery would be "news" of first-rate importance.

Apart from the cathedral, Lichfield has claims to fame as the birthplace of the great Dr. Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer, and besides an excellent Johnsonian museum established in the house where he was born, there is a lifesize statue of him and many other things to see connected with the great scholar.

Samuel Johnson was born in a substantial three-storey house in Market Street in 1709. He went to school in Lichfield and in many of his writings bore witness to his love for his native town. Furthermore he had a proper civic pride. Of the townsfolk he once wrote that they were "the most sober, decent people in England"; and once when Boswell dared to say that Lichfield folk were idle,

Johnson squashed him by saying, "Sir, we are a city of philosophers; we work with our heads, and make the boobies of Birmingham work for us with their hands." Modern Lichfield does not appreciate that saying very much, for it aspires to be an up-and-coming industrial town as well as an historic one.

It is a pity that more of England's medieval towns do not follow Lichfield's example in its desire to keep abreast of the times without sacrificing the charm of ancient things. A fine arterial road is being built round the town to divert the main road traffic from Birmingham to the North, so that the old streets of the town need not be destroyed to make way for the rush of modern traffic.

Lichfield, by the way, is one of the very few towns in England which preserves the tradition of a Court Leet—a judicial assembly held by the barons in pre-medieval days for the trial of criminal cases. With the annual celebration of this event at the Guildhall on Whit Monday there is held what is known locally as "The Greenhill Bower Festival." In olden times, following the Court Leet, the townsfolk used to adjourn to Greenhill, an open place overlooking the city streets, and there was held a Court of Array. Men at arms and knights in armour gathered there and every householder failing to answer his name at the roll call from "the dozener's list" was fined the sum of one penny—which meant a great deal more in those times than it does to-day.

* * * * *

3. I can speak French passably; I know a little German; I can say "I want something to eat" and other useful phrases, in five languages—but when it comes to trying to follow a conversation in English about fox-hunting, I have to confess I am fairly stumped!

Until I happened to find myself at "The Three Swans"

at Market Harborough, right in the middle of the English "Shires," I did not know how hopelessly ignorant I was. I tried one evening to keep track of conversation in which there was talk of hounds which "chopped foxes"; hounds "running out of scent"; hounds "marking to ground"; foxes which are "badly headed"; "tree foxes"; "outliers"—and all manner of other strange expressions.

You see, everybody at Market Harborough knows a lot about hunting and about horsey people. They know the difference between a "nagsman" and a "dealer's man." They would not have to ask, as I did, what Tom Booth meant (he is the cheery landlord of "The Three Swans") when he talked about a horse which "couldn't duck jump a wheatsdraw." I used to be able to sit on a horse all right—but here I was fairly lost in a sea of unknown verbiage. I had to ponder each phrase slowly and carefully before I got its meaning. But it was good fun even to sit by the fire in a quiet corner and hear these folks chatter over their tankards of ale. They weren't all "horsey" people, of course—but whatever they were, bricklayers or "nagsmen," automobile salesmen or store-keepers, Tom Booth had a quip and a jest for them all.

It was this atmosphere of cheery good-fellowship which caused me to "hang up my hat" at "The Three Swans" for the night and led to my going to a meet of the Fernie Hounds next day. I was homeward bound, you see, badly in need of exercise—and it didn't matter where I stayed so long as there was good company at the inn and green fields and trees and open country where I could stretch my legs. Since Market Harborough offered all these desirable things—and extremely comfortable lodging into the bargain—there I decided to stay.

I won't bore you with details of my walk that afternoon. I took the road towards Rockingham, but soon

left the highway for the fields and so had opportunity to realise why "the Shires" is the finest hunting country in England. It is gently undulating, lightly wooded with low hedges everywhere, and land seems to be almost entirely devoted to what is known here as "grassland." Half the hedges are marked with warning signs for the riders to hounds—a red disc meaning "ware wire" and a white one showing where there is no wire. Villages are few and far between and one can well understand that four of the most famous packs in England find the best of sport hereabouts, for within a few miles are the Fernie, Belvoir, Pytchley and Quorn.

It was too far for me to walk to Rockingham, but I came next day by car to catch a glimpse of the castle, a fine mansion which is a combination of ancient castle and modern residence, standing at the summit of a steep hill overlooking the Welland Valley. All round it are fine woodlands, formerly part of Rockingham Forest. The mansion was held for the King in Civil War days by Sir L. Watson who, for his services to the Royal cause, was made the first Lord Rockingham. Now, I believe, it belongs to a wealthy American. Rockingham Castle is only one of several fine old country mansions in the neighbourhood. Among others there are Deene Park, once the seat of the Countess of Cardigan, widow of the hero of Balaclava; Dingley Hall which now belongs to Earl Beatty, and Rushton Hall, built by the Sir Thomas Tresham, whose family lost the property through Sir Thomas being implicated in Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder plot.

* * * * *

4. I was standing outside "The Three Swans" next morning when I saw a "baby" car go by drawing a queer-shaped trailer behind. The trailer was shaped like a huge long, narrow box. A girl in a "bowler" hat was driving the car—and it was a moment before I realised that this



" . I JOINED FORCES WITH ' THE REV O MANBY, AS HAPPY AS HE CAN
BE '."



FRANK JONES, A NOTED " ROUGH-RIDER " ON GOLD FINDER
[Facing p. 105.

was "Miss 1933" off to a meet of the fox-hounds, with her mount in the box behind. I learned that the Fernie were to meet at Tur Langton, three miles from Market Harborough.

In fifteen minutes I was on my way to the meet and as I drove along slowly, had no difficulty in finding my way for all I had to do was to follow the stream of horse-lorries, sportsmen and grooms leading spare horses, all on their way to the meet. It was a sparkling winter morning and the village green was a sight to remember.

Hounds (the initiated, by the way, never say "the" hounds)—hounds had arrived already and there was the huntsman in velvet cap and pink coat, mounted on a fine bay gelding, waiting for the Master. The whips were moving quietly about talking to hounds by name. I saw "Miss 1933," of the bowler hat, pull up at the side of the road and soon she was mounted astride ready for the fray. Then I spotted a friend I had made the previous night in "The Three Swans." The landlord had told me he was Frank Jones, "roughrider" to Sir Harold Wernher, joint Master of the Fernie. I gathered that a "roughrider" or "nagsman" was an expert judge of a horse who, among other things, acted as sort of confidential adviser to his boss when a deal was pending. Frank Jones, it appeared, was among the most noted "nagsmen" in the Fernie country—his fame enhanced by his having been the first to spot the qualities of Brown Jack, the famous old steeple-chaser who has won something like £25,000, (\$125,000) in his nine years of life.

But at first I hardly recognised my acquaintance of the previous night in this resplendent individual in a scarlet coat sitting a magnificent sorrel. When I admired his mount he told me confidentially that "Gold Finder" was a sure winner at the Islington Horse Show then soon to be held.

Meanwhile the green was becoming crowded with riders of both sexes. A palatial Rolls-Royce stopped just by me as I chatted to Frank Jones. Here was the joint Master, Sir Harold Wernher. His groom was waiting for him and as he rode slowly among hounds, everyone he passed had a cheery "Morning, Master," for him. Of the twenty or thirty women riders, I should think two-thirds rode side-saddle—and infinitely more graceful they looked than their be-breeched sisters astride.

In the middle of all the bustle and movement—more and more riders coming on the scene; second horsemen looking out for their employers; a sprinkling of weather-beaten ladies getting settled in the saddle and looking ready to tackle any fence in the Shires; boisterous greetings between sporting farmers in long black coats that bespoke a country tailor; young bloods with canary waistcoats showing under their cut-away scarlet coats—in the middle of all this, a strange, shabby figure caught my eye. He was a short man, with a grey overcoat, clerical collar and dark grey puttees; a rough tweed cap, knobbly stick, glasses and the stub end of a cheroot in the corner of his mouth. He seemed bubbling over with good spirits and chattered merrily with everyone in sight. I went up and asked him to pose for a snapshot, telling him, by way of introduction, that I was from Canada.

"From Canada?" he said as we started to follow the hunt, now moving off down a narrow farm lane. "Let me see, I suppose you hunt jackals or something out there—like we used to do in Africa?" I said I was sorry there were no "jackals" in Canada, but that years ago we used to hunt coyotes across the unfenced prairies. Very soon, as late arrivals cantered by, ramming their hats down on their heads and showering us with chunks of mud, the parson introduced himself more formally. "My name," he said, "is Manby—'the Reverend O. Manby—as happy as he can be' as they call me here. Live at Shangton

Rectory—twenty-four rooms, dairy, laundry, brewery—much too big, faithful old housekeeper looks after me—gardener deaf. Glad to see you any time.” So with “the Rev. O. Manby, as happy as he can be,” an ardent follower of hounds, I joined forces and we made off to the open country.

THE WESTERN COUNTRY

CHAPTER NINE

I win a modest sum at the Grand National and, as a result, visit Chester—buy a bed-warmer, a Simnel cake and handle historic treasures somewhat beyond my purse.

I. I ARRIVED home the other day after an absence of four days, with two unusual additions to my modest baggage. In the back of the car, along with my suit-case, were two parcels—a long, carefully-wrapped one of uneven shape, and a small, square box marked “with care.”

Now the why and the wherefore of these two strange pieces of baggage lead me to tell you something of my wanderings after witnessing the Grand National, at Aintree. For the long, strangely-shaped parcel contained a copper bed-warmer—and the small, square one, a “simnel” cake. Let me explain. . . .

I know no more about horse-racing than a child of ten, but I had made a dollar or two when Shaun Goilin won the world's greatest steeplechase, and had determined to try my luck again. This time friend Grakle took my fancy (because he had my lucky number, “8” on the card), and carried with him to victory the large sum of 5s. (\$1.25) which I had wagered on his chances. Therefore, when I drove on to the Liverpool-Birkenhead ferry at dusk, I was richer than I felt entitled to be by some £3 10s. (\$17). I was on my way to Chester, where I had not yet had a chance of spending a night.

It was after nightfall when I drove through the narrow streets of the old city. The hotel porter came out to show me the way to the garage—on the opposite side of the street.

He pointed across the way and told me to drive "between yon two shops." I protested that I could not see any driveway, but on being assured there was one I did as I was bid and found myself steering under an old archway with half an inch to spare on either side—an excellent test of sobriety!

Later I wandered about the city; explored the walls and countless queer, narrow passages, and presently found myself gazing in admiration through the windows of an old hotel on the other side of the street at one of the loveliest oak-panelled rooms I had ever seen. I crossed over and entered the Royal Oak Hotel; I felt I must see that room. I found in the hotel, not the original ancient inn I had expected, but a fine example of the skill and craftsmanship of modern English builders—for this building, up to 1919, was one of the six oldest houses in Chester. It was erected originally in 1601, but in 1919, when it was almost tumbling into ruins, it was taken down and rebuilt in the style peculiar to Chester with some of the finest oak timbers and panelling imaginable incorporated in its design. The dining-room, which I had seen from across the street, was a lovely chamber, with black oaken beams, a huge stone fire-place and big bay window with leaded panes. The old inn, by the way, was one of the fourteen licensed houses in the kingdom which once issued their own copper tokens. This token bore the words "In Chester, 1670, Richard Briscoe's token."

Next morning I came again to peep at this lovely room, and from there made my way along "The Rows"—by which term is meant that unique covered balcony which runs along some of Chester's main streets. The shops are set back from the street, and to reach them you must mount the steps and walk along the balcony. I do not think that anything like "The Rows" of Chester exists anywhere else, and they are, rightly enough, the pride of the ancient city.

Chester, you should know, is one of the oldest and most picturesque towns in England. Its timbered buildings are unsurpassed—even in Shrewsbury, which we will visit later—and it can boast that it is the only town in England whose city walls are completely intact. At the corner of Bridge Street I spotted an hotel ("The Victoria") with the legend on it "Established 1269." For a moment I thought they must have got the figures mixed—but, later I found that it was actually a fact that an hotel had been established there nearly 700 years ago.

You will understand that when, with my £3 10s. (\$17) still intact, I paused in my wanderings in front of the premises of George Crawford, an antique dealer, of 49, Bridge Street, Chester, I was in no mood to resist temptation. Mr. Crawford's shop, I should tell you, is housed in a splendid old black-timbered building in "The Rows," erected in 1689, and once was known as St. Michael's rectory.

I allowed myself to be lured into this fascinating emporium. Mr. Crawford, a middle-aged, grey-haired man, readily consented to allow me just to "poke about" with no obligation to buy anything. Of course, for a man with £3 10s. (\$17) won on a horse-race in his pocket, the end of such a proceeding was a foregone conclusion. In five minutes I found myself asking the price of a bed-warmer—a large round copper affair, with a long wooden handle, into which, before the days of hot-water bottles, our ancestors used to put hot coals with which to heat the icy sheets.

Let me be fair to Mr. Crawford, and say that he exercised no direct pressure whatever upon me to part with my money—but while we talked, he handled fondly the bed-warmer—and, finally, his subtle salesmanship won—and I fell! I parted with thirty-five shillings and marched out triumphantly with it wrapped in the parcel I have described.

The explanation of the Simnel cake is more complicated. I felt that to arrive home having to confess that half of my winnings had been invested in a copper bed-warmer would require some explanation. A mild bribe in the form of a delicious cake might ease my path, thought I. Therefore I asked the girl in a pastry shop what was the particular virtue of the "Simnel" cakes which looked so enticing in the window. She said, "I don't know—they're just cakes. We eat them up here on Mothering Sunday." No further explanation could, or would, she vouchsafe—so I have been forced to go to books of reference to find the explanation.

It appears that, as one authority puts it, "from time beyond memory, thousands of persons come from all parts to Bury (Lancashire) to eat Simnels on Mothering Sunday," and that the ancient custom is preserved only in the northern counties of England. The origin of "Mothering Sunday" is obscure, to say the least. I have found three or more different explanations—the most likely of which is that, when Roman Catholicism was the established church of England, devout Christians were allowed by the priests to abandon their strict Lenten fast for one day—the fourth Sunday in Lent. On that day people were wont to visit their mother church and make offerings at the high altar. Afterwards they celebrated their release from fast by making the richest possible cakes—and children gave presents of these delicacies to their mothers. They picked primroses and violets in the woods also, and brought them to their church and their home. The name itself is said to have originated with the first makers of this type of cake—a man and wife named, respectively, Simeon and Nell—which has been contracted into "Simnell." So there is the explanation of that square cardboard box in the back of my car—and the pretty historical legend connected with it.

2. I must have wasted an hour or more of the valuable time of Mr. Crawford, pottering about among his antiques, tantalizing myself by asking the price of this and that (knowing full well that the £3 10s. (\$17) I had won was already half exhausted by my rash purchase of the bed-warmer).

But for all that you could tell from his courtesy and patience, Mr. Crawford might have been waiting years for this casual visit of mine. I suppose you could not call him a salesman of the "go-getter" type. His salesmanship was of an ingenuous, apparently unconscious kind. I would ask him the price of a fine old mirror or chest—and he would reply, almost deprecatingly, giving the history of this piece or that. I looked at an engraving, dated 1787, showing the inauguration of the immortal Bobby Burns into the Masonic craft. I coveted one of those strange pointed copper vessels, with a handle, which were shaped so that, when full of ale, they might be plunged down into the embers of the fire to warm the liquor. Tempted beyond endurance, I said good-bye to Mr. Crawford and his treasures and wandered out again along "The Rows."

I would go straight back to my hotel, I told myself, and not lay myself open to further temptation. And then——

I found myself gazing into a window crammed with a fascinating display of antique silverware. There were tankards of silver, candelabra, Sheffield plate trays, candle snuffers, snuff boxes and what-nots galore. I gazed so long, in full view of the proprietor or his assistant, that I felt I must go in and at least ask the price of something. The glass door bore the words, "Lowe and Sons, Gold and Silversmiths; Established 1779."

I entered the shop and asked the price of a Sheffield plate candle-snuffer of fine workmanship and solid weight which I had seen in the window. I expected a shock, and was ready for it when I was told it was £22 (\$110).

That, said I, was rather more than I cared to pay—perhaps I might be shown the handsome tankard from the same shelf?

So the huge tankard was produced for my inspection. I handled it, admired its noble proportions and solid workmanship, looked at the mark and, gingerly, again asked “How much?” This time I could hardly restrain a quiver of the eye-lids as the attendant said almost casually, “That is a fine Queen Anne piece, sir. You can have it for £165.” (\$830.)

I moistened my lips, mentioned that times being hard, the price was a little high for me just at the moment.

Luckily there was not much business doing in Chester that morning, and as I seemed loath to go, the jeweller proceeded to talk about his trade. I learned that the firm of Lowe & Sons had been carrying on business for 152 years, and had been established in this same shop for 128 years. The business had been handed down from father to son without a break—and on the wall hung an oil painting of the founder of the firm, in black coat and white “choker” collar, his hair trimmed and curled after the fashion of the late eighteenth century.

I was introduced to the present head of the firm and from him I heard that on the shelves upstairs were preserved the account books of the firm back to the first day’s business, 152 years ago! I learned fascinating details about the Chester hall mark; how the first known goldsmith of Chester was one “John the Goldsmith” who, in 1292, was entitled to set his mark on his products; how the first known example of the Chester silver mark was on a piece made in 1668. I heard the story of an urgent order which had come to the firm of Lowe and Sons from Anglesey in 1778 for a baby’s bottle, made of silver, to be despatched most urgently by the guard of the mail coach; and how this order had given exact details of the shape this bottle was to be—long years before the baby’s bottle, as we know it



THE ROWS, CHESTER

[Facing p. 117.]

to-day, had come into general use. I was shown a priceless exhibit in the shape of two tiny silver wine labels, identical except that they were made of different qualities of silver—and therefore sought after by collectors from China to Peru. I heard the tale of the kingdom-wide search the head of the firm had made for four silver candelabra to match the odd one which had come into his possession, and how, finally, the complete set had been bought by the Duke of Westminster.

Finally, Mr. Lowe asked if I would like to see the finest treasure in antique silver which had ever come into the firm's possession. When I assented eagerly, he produced for my inspection a strong cardboard box in which, nestling in cotton wool, were six perfectly plain dull silver salt cellars. They came, I learned, from Marple Hall, the ancestral home of the family of Bradshaw, whose ancestor, Judge Bradshaw, had condemned Charles I to death in 1649. Tenderly Mr. Lowe handled these historic pieces. They were priced at £100 (\$500) each—but, not being in the mood for picking up such trifles, I could enjoy the feel of these treasured relics without pangs of envy; I could imagine Judge Bradshaw, fresh from the drama of King Charles' trial, asking his neighbour to "pass the salt" and stretching out for one of them the hand which had signed Charles Stuart's death warrant. I could, in fact, revel in the drama of 250 years ago—without letting go one penny more of my ill-gotten winnings!

Yes—that was a fascinating morning—an exciting morning—and I felt I needed to repair to the quiet of the cathedral to purge myself of any lingering feelings of covetousness.

So thither I made my way, and for an hour wandered about the lovely building—so perfectly kept, so redolent of English history—and so closely linked with Canada's beginnings by reason of a faded regimental colour of the Cheshire regiment which hangs in the south transept. My

eye was caught by a large panoramic picture of the heights of Quebec, and from the legend beneath I learned that the flag above was that in which the body of Wolfe had been wrapped after his victorious death on the Heights of Abraham.

The history of Chester and its cathedral is almost the history of England in epitome. The cathedral, replacing much earlier churches destroyed by the heathen, dates in part from the eleventh century. Chester itself was a Roman camp in A.D. 61, and as one of her sons, proud of its history has written :

Here lived the painted savage
With gems and baubles gift ;
His raft first spanned yon river,
He first those bulwarks built.
Here marched the Roman soldier
Imperial in his pride,
With mailed breast and eagle crest
That owned no power beside.

Here trod the sturdy Saxon,
The jovial and the free ;
Here rushed the Danish viking,
The master of the sea ;
Here charged the steel-clad Norman
The artful and the strong—
Whose only right was mettled might,
Yet triumphed in the wrong.

CHAPTER TEN

Shrewsbury casts its spell on me—I visit countless churches and admire ancient houses—And so to Henley-in-Arden and Shakespeare's country.

1. I DON'T believe in ghosts. Otherwise I must surely have spent a sleepless night at the Crown Inn, at Shrewsbury. For this comfortable hostelry stands at what must be one of the most blood-thirsty corners in England.

Nailed to its very walls is detailed evidence of the barbarous happenings with which this site is associated.

"Near this place," reads one tablet, "was the High Cross taken down in 1687."

Here the Earl of Worcester, Sir Richard Venables and Sir Richard Vernon, were executed July 23, 1403, after the Battle of Shrewsbury. And the dead body of Henry Percy (Hotspur), was here placed between two milestones and afterwards beheaded and quartered.

And another tablet, just below, records that :

"Near this spot David III, Prince of Wales, was executed October 3, 1283.

"He was tried for high treason by the parliament which met at Shrewsbury, September 30, 1283, and was sentenced to be hanged, drawn, beheaded and quartered."

But as if to atone for these bloody events of bygone centuries, I found the Shrewsbury of to-day a lovely, peaceful country town, possessing, it seemed to me, an extraordinary number of fine churches, half a dozen ancient

and attractive inns, fine public monuments and beautiful public gardens. The churches seemed to stand cheek by jowl with each other. Across the road from my hotel was St. Mary's parish church, a vast building with a 200-ft. spire; within a few yards down a narrow lane I came on St. Alkmund's; five minutes later I found myself outside St. Julian's, while a very brief walk brought me to the abbey across the Severn bridge. Any one of these great buildings might well for their size have been a cathedral, while each of them has stood for hundreds of years.

But the pride and glory of Shrewsbury is her wealth of splendid old timbered houses, unspoiled by "restoration" though some of them are five hundred years old. I think, indeed, that if I could visit only one provincial town on a brief visit to England, and sought to carry away with me a mental picture of mediæval England, against a background of a thousand years of surging history, I should choose to visit Shrewsbury.

It is not merely that the town has records of historic happenings as far back as Saxon times in the eighth century; nor that about it Saxons, Romans, wild tribes from across the Welsh border, Cavaliers and Roundheads—all have fought and died in their day. Nor is it that archæologically, Shrewsbury must be one of the most interesting cities in the kingdom. The charm of Shrewsbury seemed to me to lie in the merging of mediævalism into the atmosphere of a modern, up-to-date centre of commerce. Shrewsbury has never set itself up as a "show place" for tourists. It welcomes them, for it is proud of its historic past and of its fine buildings—but it does not ask you to view it solely because, centuries ago, it happened to be the centre of great events. You do not go to this old town just to look at ancient buildings, however fine they may be—but to see at first-hand the evolution of modern civilisation from the remote past. Shrewsbury is not a "museum piece." It

is a live, modern city with all English history as its background.

In its street names it has preserved the very flavour of pre-reformation times. Where can you find names so quaint and alluring as "Wyle Cop," "Dogpole," "Mardol," or "Abbey Foregate?" Where else can you find anything quite like that overhanging, timbered house half way up the steep grade of Wyle Cop—still inhabited, with a butcher's shop on the street level—where Henry VII stayed the night on his way to Bosworth field in 1485? Shrewsbury refuses to set it aside as an "exhibit." It is just part of the everyday life of the town. Or again, there is the Council House where Edward IV presided at the Council of the Marches. It has oak-panelled rooms and magnificent carved fireplaces, and furniture equal to any in Britain—but it is still in use as a private residence.

Shrewsbury's wealth of ancient hostelries is positively embarrassing. There was "The Raven" which tempted me because I learned it was 500 years old and had once been a monastery. "The Lion" attracted me because here Charles I had stayed three weeks and Paganini, the greatest violinist of his day, had played in the Minstrels' gallery; and because, too, the ballroom is claimed to be the most perfect in the Adams' style in existence. "The Unicorn" is another ancient inn with many attractions—but, for my part, I chose "The Crown" as being in the centre of the city, and to be able to tell myself as I slept peacefully within its walls how lucky I was to be living in a time when they had ceased to hang, draw and quarter people, or crush their bodies between millstones, for the amusement and edification of the public!

The few hours I spent in Shrewsbury were all too short to explore its treasures. I visited St. Mary's church, admiring the great Jesse window at the east end; took note of the massive proportions of the abbey; walked down Wyle

Cop—and up again to see the beauty of Henry VII's resting place from another angle; found my way to the magnificent timbered houses in Butcher Lane and, finally, made my pilgrimage to the statue of Charles Darwin and Lord Clive—both of them native sons of Shrewsbury.

Before breakfast next morning—which happened to be a Sunday—I had walked several miles to note from a distance the almost impregnable position which Shrewsbury castle must have occupied centuries ago. The River Severn flows on three sides of the town and the castle, still in use as a barracks, dominates all the country round.

As I walked along the river bank beneath the castle walls, I stopped to ask a question of a man I encountered. Seeing that I was a stranger, he insisted that I must see the “English bridge” before I finished my walk, and he turned and walked back with me. We walked on until we came to a point where we could fully appreciate the fine design and solid masonry of “The English bridge.” I learned that the present structure was completed in 1927, replacing a former bridge built in 1774, and incorporating much of the ancient masonry.

Unfortunately I had not time to explore the beauties of “The Quarry” gardens, to see the public library or the great school which crowns the hill above the river. But having tasted the charms of Shrewsbury I shall go there again with a day or two to spare so that I can explore it more at leisure.

* * * * *

2. One morning as I walked with untroubled conscience, to catch my train, I felt an unusually heavy weight in my pocket. I thrust in my hand and produced a key. It was a key of noble proportions, like one belonging to a church door.

"Now where the Dickens did I get that?" I asked myself. And then—horrors! it dawned on me. This was one of the keys of the Guildhall of Henley-in-Arden! And the village council meets on Mondays—and this was Thursday. What if that august body had been unable to enter their ancient chamber and deliberate on affairs of great moment? Anyway—at this juncture the only thing to do was to send the key back at once and explain my lapse of memory as best I might.

I did that, and, at the time, hoped devoutly I should not be arrested before I had time to set down something about this lovely old village—and other places I visited on this expedition.

It came about in this way. I felt called on to go to Birmingham, and later to Cardiff. Frankly I dislike sleeping in large towns—when I can find a bed in a village somewhere handy to them. Therefore I made up my mind to try Henley-in-Arden, some thirteen miles from Birmingham, on the main road from London. Its long straight street, lined with wonderful old timbered houses, had attracted me more than once, and the music of its name was enough to make me determine some time or other to spend a night there. This was my chance—and I seized it.

It was a hot summer's day and by the time I reached Stratford-on-Avon, eight miles from Henley, I was parched with thirst. So I decided to break my journey there for a short rest. I wandered down to the gardens alongside the river, meaning to leave almost at once. But the river looked so cool and inviting, the boats so restful and alluring—that I found myself making a deal for a rowboat for half an hour.

I should tell you, perhaps, that much as I admire Shakespeare, I have often gone miles out of my way to avoid his birthplace in the summer months. Whenever I had been there on previous occasions the place had been

thronged with tourists—quite naturally and rightly—of every description. I am an inveterate sight-seer myself—but I dislike my own kind *en masse*. And, of all places, Stratford-on-Avon is THE place to encounter tourists in bulk, so to speak. But this time the place seemed different. The broad main street, lined with gimcrack curio and souvenir shops, was almost deserted. The pretty gardens by the river seemed populated only by residents taking life calmly. Positively I liked Stratford at last. I began to realise what a lovely spot it is—apart from its historic associations. I took off my coat and rowed gently under the old stone bridge down as far as the weir—to the point where you get the loveliest view of the church. Long before I was ready to leave the quiet beauty of the river, my half hour was up—and I must be on my way.

Five o'clock found me driving beneath the enormously high gateway into the yard of "The Bell Inn" at Henley-in-Arden. The gateway obviously was built to allow a full-loaded four-horse coach to pass safely through it. I made the acquaintance of a namesake of mine, Mrs. Nellie Johnston, who with her husband, runs the "Bell," inspected the room with the floor of hand-axed oak planks where I was to sleep, changed into my old clothes and came down into the parlour prepared for a walk.

"So you're from Canada, mister," said the proprietor as he scanned my name in the visitors' book. "Well, well—nearly all the empire has been here this week it seems. There's two from New Zealand just gone, now you from Canada—and there's a gentleman from Australia came in last night. You'll meet him presently, sir."

I was eager to be off exploring, so I set out over the hills and fields to Preston Bogart. All this, of course, is almost sacred ground to the student of Shakespeare, for here are laid the Forest of Arden scenes in *As You Like It*. But exercise interested me more at the moment than Shake-

speare and I strode down the main street until I came to the parish church hard by the black-timbered old Guildhall which dates from 1449. I looked in to the church for a moment—pausing long enough in the porch to read the usual notice asking the congregation's prayers for "our people overseas." From Henley-in-Arden, sons and daughters have gone out to Canada to form links with the Old Country, and here were names of nearly a dozen Canadians. They were Annie, Percy, and Harold Atkins in B.C.; Albert E. Edkins of Toronto; Ralph and Dennis Harris in Alberta; Harry Haines in Montreal; Roland and Francis Stokes; and Harold D. Woodward in Quebec.

Then I hastened on, down a side street past the little old church of Beaudesert-cum-Henley-in-Arden, within a stone's throw of the larger parish church, over a stile and so through green meadows, past pretty cottages, half covered with climbing roses, pausing for a word with a country-woman feeding her flock of white wyandottes, and along narrow lanes with steep banks. At length, hot and somewhat leg-weary, I came to a "pub" called by the strange name of "Crabmill Inn." From the man who served me with a pint of "shandygaff" I tried to discover what a "crab mill" might be—but I left him no wiser than when I arrived.

At supper, after a bath, I found my Australian companion-lodger, home on a visit to relatives, and the evening passed soon enough with a walk down the main street and a friendly pipe with mine host and his wife and daughter.

Next morning bright and early I was away again for another tramp, but ten o'clock found me at the caretaker's cottage of the splendid old Guildhall, whose key reminded me to tell you this simple tale. It happened that the caretaker was out when I arrived, but from the stairs of her cottage a woman's voice told me to take the keys from behind the door and admit myself to the upstairs

council chamber. I duly inspected and admired the fine restoration work done a few years ago by a former Lord of the Manor, William John Fieldhouse ; noted the ancient town charter with the great seal attached to the glass frame, and departed—with the key in my pocket.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The two Burfords—I fail to solve a riddle but enjoy a country walk and make some friends—The “Speche House” in the Forest of Dean becomes a port of call.

I. I HAVE told you that, as a rule, I try to avoid “famous beauty spots” where hordes of tourists are likely to be encountered, and I am afraid I had placed the village of Burford, in Oxfordshire, in the category of places to be avoided. Had it not been for unforeseen circumstances I should probably never have stayed a night in this lovely Cotswold village.

I had thought to lie at “The New Inn,” at Gloucester. Its old coaching courtyard and the wide covered verandah round it, on to which bedrooms open, had attracted me more than once when I had passed through the town. But I had a shock when, arriving there about nine o’clock, I found there was not a bed to be had. This may have been a tribute to the good fare of the Inn—but it was a bad blow for me. The pleasant girl in the office recommended me to push on to “The Gateway Inn,” at Burford, thirty miles on along the London road.

So at “The Gateway” I arrived about half past ten. For centuries an inn has stood on the site of this very modern hostelry. At one time it was known as “The Bird in Hand” and down in the village next day I learned that there was a postman still doing his rounds in Burford whose father had once been stable boy at “The Bird in Hand” back in 1860 or thereabouts—what time ten coaches a day might draw up at the inn and change horses there.

But to-day "The Gateway" is one of the latest type of English inns—built to cater to a luxury-loving automobiling public. It is a big stone building on the main road above the village—with electric light, hot and cold water in the rooms, handsome furniture, waiters in boiled shirts and everything. Not quite in my line—but still extremely comfy after a long day's driving. The proprietors know their job furthermore—which is not universal in English country inns. I found myself at once a welcome "guest"—not a mere customer who arrived at an inconveniently late hour.

As a matter of fact "Burford, Oxfordshire," has always had a peculiar interest for me because it was at "Burford, Ont.", near Brantford, that I first learned to handle a fork-load of manure and to navigate a one-horse plough. I wanted to discover the relationship between the two Burfords. Unfortunately I am still no nearer solving this riddle—but at least my enquiries brought me the pleasant acquaintance of old Mr. Foster, the postmaster of "Burford, Oxon."

When I asked in a stationer's store who would be most likely to elucidate this problem I was told to call on Mr. Foster. Therefore I crossed the street and, entering the post office, asked for him. An elderly man with short-clipped white beard and moustache, steel-rimmed spectacles on the end of his nose and without his coat came forward.

"I'm told you have been here a long time, Mr. Foster," I said.

"Well—I'm seventy years of age—and I was born in this house—so I suppose I have," he said. Then I propounded my question about "Burford, Ont."—and thereupon Mr. Foster launched into his tale. He couldn't answer my question—but he could tell me of the trouble that the confusion between the two towns had caused him forty years ago in the matter of letters delivered in "Ont" instead of "Oxon." It appeared that Mr. Foster had gone out to

Chicago to a good job for an English contractor in 1884. He got the job because he spoke French fluently and, at that time, there were large numbers of French-Canadians employed in Chicago. There, it appeared, he had met his future wife, whose father (also an Englishman) had gone out to Chicago in 1871—shortly before the great fire—as a music teacher and exponent of the new Curwen's "tonic sol-fa" system. He was leader of a church choir there.

Two years later Mr. Foster's father, then getting on in years, was offered the postmastership of his native town of Burford, Oxon—provided his son could be persuaded to return from Chicago to help in the work. So my friend, Mr. Foster, by now engaged to his future wife, came home to Burford, Oxon. His fiancée used to write regularly to him, and, just as regularly, his letters used to go to "Burford, Ont." All of which caused him to remember the little town in Ontario.

Mr. Foster mapped out a five-mile walk for me which took me through the village of Fullbrook, and thence to Winford, Swinbrook and Astall. Once you leave the main roads in these parts you are soon in the depths of the country—unchanged by all the rush and scurry of modern inventions. Thus beside the pretty village green in Swinbrook I came on an old lady with two capacious buckets drawing water from the village tap. She must have been seventy at least I judged and her face was deeply lined and weather-beaten. Wisps of white hair strayed from under the shabby man's cap on her head. She wore a blue overall apron over a sweater of faded orange colour. Her hands were broad and gnarled like a man's from hard toil.

I paused to talk with her, and told her I was from Canada.

"Oo from Canada," she said, "that be where me and my old man near went more'n fifty years ago—aye, our labels were all made and ready—and then we didn't go." The memory of the high hopes they must have had of the new

land half a century ago seemed still to give an edge to her interest in the Dominion.

"Never mind," she said presently, "we've done some travellin' round about just the same. We bin all over Gloucestershire, I reckon. My husband he were a carter before the rheumatics crippled him all up. Now we be old we must stay right here. 'Tain't so easy, mister, when you get old—and rent goes up from three pounds a year like it used to be, to six pound a year now. We get the old age pension—but there's not much to spare."

By now the first bucket was only half filled, for the tap just dripped slowly—and I learned that in this old couple's cottage there was no water laid on—and no light save oil lamps and candles—and that this old lady had to walk a quarter of a mile each way to the village tap for every drop of water she needed!

"Aye—in Canada may be we'd ha' made a fortune mister—for we allus bin great ones for hard work, me and my old man," she said sadly.

I left her standing patiently by the tap—dreaming, I suppose, of what might have been in the great land across the seas.

Presently as I was sitting on a pile of gravel by the roadside taking off my boot to adjust the insole, an elderly, clean-shaven man with white hair and wearing plus fours passed by. He was tall and well set up, of grave mien and he puffed at a curly pipe as he passed absorbed in thought. He glanced up, however, to answer my "Good day." He looked like a scholar, I thought, and put him down as such taking a holiday at some nearby farmhouse.

Half a mile further along the road I spotted a female figure seated under the lee of a wall, enjoying the brief interval of sunshine and looking towards the distant spire of Burford Church which peeped over the slope of the hill. She wore a grey mackintosh and on her knees was a writing pad.



BURFORD ONE OF THE COTSWOLDS' MOST PERFECT VILLAGES.

"Are you sketching the view?" I said by way of introduction as I came abreast of her. But she was writing a letter—not too urgent, however, to prevent her sparing a minute for conversation with a wayfarer. I learned that this good lady with the gentle, kindly expression was Mrs. Grubb and that her husband was the scholarly man I had passed along the road. Our conversation turned, of course, to Canada, and I found that they had a son, Dunnington, near Toronto, and a daughter who, after attending Havergal College, was doing Social Welfare work in Vancouver. Mrs. Grubb had been in eastern Canada herself on a visit to her son—and I ventured to disagree with her when she said that at her age she could hardly expect to go out again. For despite the number of years she told me she had lived—I could discern no signs of anything like old age. We chatted on—and Mrs. Grubb told me that she and her husband were Quakers and that all their thoughts were much bound up in the hopes of disarmament.

Strange, isn't it, how at almost every turn in the road in this Old Country you come in touch with people whose interests at some point in their lives have been bound up with Canada.

* * * * *

2. My meeting with Mrs. Grubb on the roadside leads me to tell you of Burford Church, one of the finest in the Midlands. (All my rambles seem to lead sooner or later to the village church!)

I have no intention of attempting to tell the history of Burford Church (part of which dates from 1180) but one tragic incident in its long history I must record. There is an old stone font dating from about 1350 and on the lead lining of it is scrawled "Anthony Sedley, 1649, prisner."

Enquiring about this queer inscription I learned that it was in the streets of Burford that Oliver Cromwell finally subdued the rebels in his army who were known as Levellers.

Cromwell and his men burst into the town at midnight—and by false promises of security, before morning those of the 400 mutineers who were still alive were incarcerated in the church. Among them was Anthony Sedley. Next morning three of the rebels were led out into the churchyard and executed, while their comrades were given a full view of the business. Immediately thereafter Cromwell had the public admitted to the nave of the church, mounted the pulpit and by his eloquence so wrought up the feelings of the rebels who were given prominent seats, that with tears and groans they returned to duty.

But to return to Mr. and Mrs. Grubb . . . when I learned that they were Quakers I told Mrs. Grubb of an interesting little link of history I had discovered on a tomb in Burford Church. To explain my particular interest in it I must tell you that a year or two ago I dined in the Barber-Surgeons' Hall in London. It is one of the oldest City Companies, and on the wall of their ancient dining hall is a very large canvas by Holbein depicting King Henry VIII granting a charter to the Barber-Surgeons' Company. The original members of the company are kneeling before King Hal and the painting of each one of them is a portrait in itself. Among the Barber-Surgeons in this picture—third figure from the right—is John Penn, father of William Penn, the great Quaker who founded Pennsylvania.

I recalled all this as I talked to Mrs. Grubb. And as it happened, in Burford Church that morning I had come across a link with this picture. For on the tomb of one Edmond Harman, Esquire, who died in 1569 was a photographic reproduction of the picture in the possession of the Barber-Surgeons—and a note on the back of it stating that Edmond Harman was the fourth figure from the right—the next one to John Penn.

Edmond Harman, commemorated in this elaborate tomb, was evidently a man of some note hereabouts for his elaborate epitaph reads as follows :

“Edmond Harman, Esquire, whom God from his earliest years blessed with countless benefits, put up this monument to the Christian memory of himself and of his only and most faithful wife Agnes and of the sixteen children whom, by God’s mercy, she bore him.

1569

“I was not; then by God’s will I was born to be a man; and I shall live again from my own seed. In the Great Day, the bodies which we think have perished by decay shall rise again whole at God’s word.

“Drive out fear from my heart, O my body, and believe . . . laugh at the threats of disease, despise the blows of misfortune, care not for the dark grove and go forward at Christ’s summons.”

All of which seems to indicate that the late Mr. Harman had a pretty gift of language, which, one may not unreasonably hope, has been passed on to future generations by one or other of his sixteen children.

But the church is full of interesting memorials and quaint epitaphs. Here is another one:

“Here lyeth the body of
Elizabeth, wife of Edward Neale, Belfounder,
deceased
August the 8th, 1671,

“Here may I rest Under this tombe,
Not to be moved till the day of doome,
Unless my husband who did mee wed
Doth lye with mee when he is dead.”

It is evident that the citizens of Burford were not unmindful of their duty to the poor in centuries gone by, for on a painted board on the wall of an apse is a long list of benefactions of past inhabitants. Some of them sound strange in these days when the value of money is so much

less than it was in the early eighteenth century. For instance it is recorded that :

“ Ralph Willett of Kingham, clerk, gave a cow for ye benefit of ye poor which was afterwards sold for 1 L 10 sh. which summ together with 10 sh. added to it by ye Burgesses is set out to interest for ye benefit of ye poor.”

* * * * *

3. If it had not been that I had a puncture on the road between Chepstow and Lydney I doubt if I should have troubled to visit the famous old Speche House in the forest of Dean. So for once in my life I feel thankful for such a misfortune.

The road is narrow in parts between Chepstow and Lydney and, what with the sharp curves and the gorgeous view over to my right, I came near to slaying two countrymen who were trudging up a long, gentle hill on their way home from work. That marvellous panorama over the broad mouth of the Severn river to the Cotswold hills beyond momentarily distracted my attention from the business of driving a car with due care and nearly led to disaster.

Thus I drew up suddenly within three feet of these pedestrians, apologised for my carelessness and decided it would be safer to get out of the car and enjoy the view in comfort. The countrymen soon got over their annoyance and paused to chat awhile. The sun was sinking in the west hiding now and then behind fleecy clouds and throwing long shadows across the peaceful meadows and the river beyond. We talked of one thing and another for a few minutes—of farming, wages and coal and, just as they were leaving, one of them pointed out that I had a flat tyre.

Strictly speaking I was on my way to Gloucester, where I expected to spend the night—but this misfortune, happening in such an isolated district seemed likely to upset my

plans. Therefore I asked if there was anywhere nearer that I could get a bed if need be.

"Why for sure, sir," said the elder of the two. "You shouldn't ought to miss 'The Speche House' anyways if you be just wanderin' like. There be much to see at yon Speche House—the murderers' room and such like."

A "murderers' room" sounded sufficiently thrilling certainly, so I enquired further what he meant.

"Why for sure, sir, there be a murderers' room at the Speche House. Don't rightly know who they was, or why—but there it be, sir."

At once my route was changed, and after having the damaged tyre repaired at Lydney village, I turned northwards through the lovely forest of Dean intent on investigating "the murderers' room" at the Speche House.

It is true that "the murderers' room" turned out to be "the Verderers' room"—perhaps I had misunderstood the countryman's dialect—but in any case the diversion proved well worth while, and in "Ye Speche House" I found I could sup in great comfort and also learn something of the history of the forest of Dean.

I had associated this forest in my mind only with coal pits and, such was my ignorance, I had no idea that so great an area of undisturbed forest land still existed there. "The Speche House" stands at the highest point in the great forest surrounded on all sides by woods of oak and beech and holly—while the unsightly mines are hidden away and the beauty of this part of the forest left undisturbed. To-day the old building serves as an inn—but in olden times it was the headquarters of the warden and verderers of the forest, who kept guard over the royal hunting grounds and were directly and solely responsible to the crown. The rights and privileges of the Verderers court go back for centuries and even to-day, in theory at least, the court sits every forty days to hear cases of infractions of the forest laws.

In olden days their powers were very great, but in Stuart times, after the civil war, their functions were limited to matters connected with the preservation of the forest deer. The Speche House was completed about 1680 and parts of the original structure are still in use. It was the headquarters of general forest business and there also were held sessions of the Mine law court which regulated the rights of forest-dwellers as to wood and coal. There were stormy times in Charles II's time when the forest-dwellers rebelled against the rulings of the Mine law court and destroyed some of the forest lodges.

The room in which I supped is the original courtroom—at one end of which is a low raised gallery of oak where the chief Verderer still presides when the court of attachment sits. It is a great room some forty feet by twenty-five. Its ancient roof-beams are supported by curving wall-pieces and at one end of the room is a wide open hearth. The walls are decorated with antlers of the forest's long-departed deer.

The origin of the forest courts is lost in the mists of history. Some deem them to be survivals of the early forest laws, established by William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. Others believe them to be of far more ancient date. It is argued by some antiquarians that the forty-day intervals at which the courts are held constitute an unusual division of time. The Druidical year was of 360 days, which, divided by nine—a sacred Druidical number—gives forty days. Again—the forest is thick with holly trees—and holly was a sacred tree to the Druids. It is on record that witnesses before the Verderers' court were once allowed to take their oath upon a stick of holly. Further, the Druidical day began at noon—which is the hour set by tradition for the opening of the court of attachment.

Whatever the origin of the courts it is certain that from the forest of Dean came much of the stout oaken timbers for the ships of the great sailors of Britain in centuries gone

by. It is certain also that in William the Conqueror's day the unauthorised killing of a deer or a wild boar in the forest was punished by the putting out of an eye—a barbarous practice not abolished until the Forest Charter of 1217 in which the boy-king Henry III ruled that "No man henceforth shall lose neither life nor limb for killing our deer."

I tried, without much success, to learn something of the history of "The Speche House" from the waiter who served me. It appeared that he had spent six years farming at Meaford, Ontario—and devoutly wished he was back in Canada. He intimated vaguely—and quite incorrectly I think—that Charles II had once fled to "The Speche House" for refuge.

When I asked for more exact details he could not supply them. "Can't say for why, sir," he said, "but it's all in history." Later he took me upstairs to see the enormous four-poster beds of mahogany and walnut. When I suggested tentatively that King Charles might have slept in one of those vast structures—he agreed readily that it was highly probable. Subsequently, however, I learned that the furniture was purchased about fifty years ago by the late proprietor from a country house on the outskirts of the forest.

Nevertheless of the age and historic interest of "His Majesty's Court of Speche" there is no doubt.

THE WELSH BORDERLAND

CHAPTER TWELVE

I put up at "The Feathers" at Ledbury and see visions of stormy days of the Civil War—Eastnor Castle brings back boy-hood memories.

1. It was late one Friday afternoon when I got away from the last of a dozen appointments in Birmingham. I had been interviewing manufacturers since early morning—and my brain was befuddled with talk of production costs, preferential tariffs, freight rates and what not. I wanted peace and quiet to straighten out the tangle. I was due for another round of appointments in Cardiff on the Monday.

This section of England—and south-east Wales—offered me a bewildering variety of delightful resting places. Should I allow Worcester to tempt me—to hear one of the finest cathedral choirs in England on the Sunday?—or should it be Malvern, the fashionable health resort? Or what about Hereford—or Ross-on-Wye with its lovely view of the river's famous horseshoe bend? or Monmouth, perhaps—or——

I decided on Ross-on-Wye—and should certainly have lain there for the night had not fate, in the shape of a perfect deluge of rain, taken a hand and almost forced me to change my plans. I took the road south-west out of Birmingham, through Bromsgrove and Droitwich and so reached Worcester about seven in the evening. Already the storm had burst and I decided to sup at an hotel there. I might even have stayed the night had not my meal been disturbed by the din of a radio loudspeaker, so placed that there was no escape from it anywhere. I wanted peace and quiet—but

though I took my seat in the dining-room in a distant corner—I was pursued first by the “news” and then by a vaudeville programme from which there was no escape. I asked the waiter if this racket could not be stopped. His reply was that it went on every day from noon onwards. That decided me—I would push on somewhere else, despite the deluge.

In Malvern I turned down the lower road, through Malvern Wells, instead of going over the great hill from whose summit on a fine day you get such a magnificent view. But on this night the rain turned every down grade into a miniature river and when I reached Ledbury I thought I was entitled to a rest.

I had no intention of remaining there over night; I dropped in to “The Feathers” to say “how d’you do” to Mrs. Townsend, the Australian lady who is hostess of this lovely old Elizabethan Inn, intending to push on for the remaining twelve miles to Ross almost at once. But my eye fell on that sparkling array of old brass and copper utensils on the stair landing; my hand rested on the smooth, broad surface of the oaken bannisters—from which I knew the paint had been stripped only a few years ago, and finally I peeped into the cosiness of the parlour—and I was lost. I must stay at Ledbury for this night.

Soon the car was in the garage for the night and I found myself gossiping with townsfolk in the parlour. For years I had been trying to remember the name of a hamlet, some miles from Ledbury, where I vaguely remembered staying as a boy, thirty years ago. I described to a countryman sitting next to me the view of a battlemented castle, with a lake before it and swans and waterfowl in the reeds surrounding it. “Eastnor Castle”—that was it—and the hamlet near it, where we had stayed was “Hollybush.” I would walk there in the morning and see these old haunts.

Then someone asked me if I had seen the improvements they had made in “Ye Olde Talbot Inne,” just round the

corner from "The Feathers." I had not—so just before "closing time" I made my way to "Ye Olde Talbot Inne" and there had the joy of seeing what I think is the most perfect Tudor oak-panelled dining-room I have come across. Until a year or two ago "The Talbot" was a very ordinary "pub"—old, of course, but that is not unusual in this land.

Then it was taken over by Mr. and Mrs. Will Page who, with consummate taste and skill, had the old Inn refitted and refurnished and have restored much of its old-time charm. The dining-room is panelled to the ceiling with carved oak. There are two extremely handsome overmantels bearing the date 1596 and the initials "A.N."—which no one can at present explain, unless they be the initials of the artist who carved them. But it was easy in this atmosphere to picture the room as it must often have been in Civil War days—when Prince Rupert, billeted in the old timbered house that is now Lord Biddulph's residence, would step across the road to "The Talbot" for relaxation in its more convivial atmosphere. There, no doubt, with back to the great log fire, pewter mug in one hand and long clay pipe in the other, he would gossip and jest with his senior officers and, perhaps, lay plans for the overthrow of Cromwell and his men whom already they had driven from the town.

So it was late when I turned in in the extremely comfortable room allotted me at "The Feathers." It was quiet too—and I slept like a log for once, to be awakened only by a knock at the door by a maid with an early cup of tea. There was solid comfort at this old inn and a friendly welcome which made me feel more like a guest of Mrs. Townsend than a mere wayfarer.

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2. I had meant to start out from "The Feathers" for my walk to Eastnor immediately after an early breakfast. I ought to have known better! How could anyone step out

into "Homend," as they picturesquely call the main street, ignore the mellowed beauty of the old town; thrust all its historical lore out of mind—and turn one's back on it! For there across the street was the great bulk of "The Park"—Lord Biddulph's huge half-timbered house; a few yards lower down was the old Market House set up on stilts of Spanish chestnut, with the idlers already seated in the places they and their predecessors have occupied daily these 250 years; over the tops of the old houses the tall spire of one of the finest churches in the Midlands was to be seen—and I knew, too, that this was John Masefield's home town, where he had gained inspiration for works that will live as long as English literature lasts. One could not simply walk away from all this. I must explore—for an hour or so at least.

You should know that Ledbury takes immense pride in its history and in its association with historic characters. It was mentioned in the Domesday Book as "*Leideberge*," and in pre-historic times several old British roads and tracks crossed in what is now the main street. I cannot trace its history through all the centuries—but the townsfolk can tell you of the Battle of Ledbury in Charles I's time, for instance. It may not be mentioned in the history books, but Ledbury regards it as an event of world importance. Indeed, in a glass case in the church, you may see a relic of that mighty battle in the sword of one Major Backhouse, an officer of the Parliamentary army. For in 1645 Ledbury was being held for the parliament by Governor Massey, of Gloucester, with a garrison of 1,000 men. Prince Rupert, from Hereford, attacked the town and, charging down "Homend" at the head of his cavalry, drove Massey and his men out along the Gloucester Road. Major Backhouse, mortally wounded, was carried into "a house at the High Cross," and died there. His sword was hidden in the roof of the house and was only discovered after 200 years, in 1887.

Dick Whittington, who was born in 1358, was the son of a local knight. Here also lived Elizabeth Barrett Browning until her father's financial disasters forced him to sell his estate of "Hope End," which the family left in carriages at dawn one morning, "so that the tradesmen should not see their fallen estate." If you saw that magnificent play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, you might, perhaps have pictured the Barrett family living in this old Herefordshire town and have recalled that the crippled poetess wrote her first verses, inspired by her childhood surroundings, in the garden of "Hope End" at the age of seven.

But of all its famous sons and daughters, Ledbury to-day is most proud of John Masefield, the poet laureate. Masefield was born at The Knapp, Ledbury, and all his boyhood was spent here.

His father was a solicitor in the town, and to-day, outside an old-fashioned house near the church, there is a brass plate which announces that "Charles Masefield, Solicitor" (the brother of the poet laureate) can be consulted within. For years Masefield lived at The Manor House, just off Homend, but later moved to another secluded estate at the end of the town. Ledbury revels in local allusions in John Masefield's works. They can pick out for you "Miss Bourne, the Friend," in a certain old Mrs. Radley, a well-known resident; and they say that the cleric who is described in a towering passion is none other than a certain vicar of Ledbury in the nineteenth century; and the "loafers and spitters" are the predecessors of the idlers who still polish the seat down at the Old Market House.

The storekeeper from whom I bought some films told me I simply must not miss the church, so I made my way there along a narrow lane where the overhanging houses nearly touched, and spent half an hour meditating on its beauty and reading its memorial tablets. The church dates back to the fourteenth century and is one of the fifteen churches in

England whose tower is quite detached from the church. Such towers were built for defence in olden times and there the inhabitants often found refuge from enemies. Ledbury church tower is topped by a steeple which reaches 203 feet above the ground.

I came on a marble plaque to the memory of Edward Moulton Barrett and Mary his wife, the first of whom died in 1857, aged seventy-one, and the latter in 1843, aged forty-three. No hint in this simple memorial of the storms of passion and jealous love for his eldest daughter, that, seventy years after his death, was to make the life of Edward Moulton Barrett the theme of one of the greatest of modern plays ; no hint of the tragedy of bitter selfishness that caused him never to forgive Elizabeth for her marriage in 1846 to young Robert Browning. Ledbury likes to remember only the beauty of the life of Elizabeth Browning ; the early affection between her and her father ; how she used to wait for him in her pony chaise by the old turnpike gate near the top of Homend while he went into town. Time mellow all things—and perhaps will mellow the memory of Edward Moulton Barrett and make one forget the terrifying personality portrayed in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*.

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3. When at length I was able to drag myself away from Ledbury's old parish church and to reach the Gloucester Road on my way to Eastnor Castle by way of the narrow stone-flagged passage that skirts John Masefield's former manor, it was long after 10 o'clock. I made good speed up the long hill, with the result that when I came near to the top and espied an elderly man seated by the roadside awaiting the bus, I must needs join him and rest also.

Thus I made the acquaintance of James Barrett of Bosbury, all of whose seventy years have been spent on farms around Ledbury. He asked me where I came from, and when I said "from Canada," the old chap replied, "Begob,



LEDBURY

(Courtesy of A James)



LEDBURY'S 17TH CENTURY MARKET HALL
[Facing p 147

(Courtesy of A James)

guvnor—ye've been seein' a tidy bit of the country then, you have for sure."

"One time I might have gone to Ameriky meself, wi' a boatload of cattle," he went on, "but I fell to courting a gal—and we married instead. Maybe I should have done well to go for a year or two—but there, I've bin happy—six out of eight children we raised." I learned, too, that a great sorrow had fallen on him a few months before when he had lost his wife—and the loneliness had been hard to get used to.

We turned to the topic of agriculture, "Aye," said Mr. Barrett, "time was when we grew plenty of wheat round Ledbury. I've worked on thirteen farms hereabouts, man and boy in my time, and I can remember when farming was prosperous. But things is all changed now—and what's only grassland for dairy cows was once wheatfields."

I asked him to pose for a snapshot before I left him. It took only a few seconds, of course, but the speed of a modern camera seemed to astound this countryman. "Ye've finished it?" he said in astonishment as I shut up the camera, "Begob that do be mighty quick fer a photygraph, guvnor," he said.

Presently I passed "The Somerset Arms" and so came to the tiny picturesque village of Eastnor. Castle Eastnor was the home of that splendid woman, Lady Henry Somerset, a noble pioneer of temperance reform in England at the end of the last century and much beloved in all this countryside until her death in 1931. The little village nestles round the green opposite the main gates to the castle. Great shady trees surround it and, with its fine old oak-timbered cottages, it is one of the loveliest spots imaginable.

I made the purchase of some stamps an excuse to go into the tiny post-office—housed in a white-walled cottage with a deep thatched roof. In front of it was a perfect cottage garden with climbing roses and bright flowers. The post-mistress, from her twenty-eight years here, had amassed a

great store of information about the family "up at the castle," and, had I wanted it, I am sure I could have learned from her a complete family history and genealogical tree of Lord and Lady Somers who now own it. I learned that "His Lordship" had been for five years Governor of Victoria, Australia; of the villagers' concern for the health of Lady Apsley, sister of Lady Somers, who had been seriously injured in a hunting accident; of the many benefactions of the late Lady Henry Somerset and of the affection in which she was held, and how "her ladyship" up at the castle now, carries on the traditional interest and care for the welfare of the village folk.

From Eastnor I walked on along the road towards Hollybush to see again the view of the castle which had stuck in my memory for more than thirty years. And the view was as lovely as ever—with the swans still moving serenely on the glassy surface on the lake and the grim battlemented towers of the castle looking out over the peaceful landscape.

What with my visit to Ledbury Church and the walk to Eastnor and back, it was already long after noon when finally I took the road for Ross-on-Wye. I lunched in great content at "The King's Head" there and only regretted that I could not stay longer in this fine old town.

Ross-on-Wye, of course, is a famous beauty spot. It stands on a hill of its own overlooking the horseshoe bend of the river, and is a favourite rendezvous for ardent fishermen. Charles Dickens often stayed in the town, whose history is probably as long and interesting almost as that of Ledbury. But I could stay for no more than a glimpse of the old stone market house, in the middle of the town, built on its stone pillars in the reign of Charles II. I knew that only a few miles away I should be in the heart of the beautiful Wye Valley and I wanted to dawdle—and perhaps take a boat and row up the river towards Symonds' Yat; and even climb the lofty height from which, they say, you can see into fourteen counties of England and Wales. Where I

was to lie for the night I had, at present, no notion—but the prospect of a cup of tea on the lawns of “The Beaufort Arms” at Tintern, overlooking the glorious ruins of the Abbey, made me hasten away from the beauties of Ross-on-Wye which I must visit again when opportunity offers.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

*By way of Symonds' Yat and Tintern, I come to Abergavenny—
climb the Sugar Loaf and disturb the peaceful isolation of some
fishermen at Llanthony Abbey.*

I. I DROVE southward from Ross-on-Wye, taking time to enjoy to the full all the placid beauty of the green countryside and to miss none of the glimpses of the river meandering down to its mouth in the broad Severn below Chepstow. At Whitechurch I turned down a narrow road to Symonds' Yat, one of the most famous beauty spots in England. A mile further on at a sharp bend in the road, a small boy, dressed in a rather shabby page's uniform of bright green with gilt buttons—and looking strangely out of place at the gate of a soggy field—besought me to park my car in his meadow. Rather dubiously I did so—and found that I had nearly a mile to walk to the row boat landing, when I might have driven right there. However, the walk was pleasant enough—if wet underfoot—and the superb view from the summit of the 500-foot rock above the miniature gorge of the river was well worth going to see.

The word "yat," by the way, is an old local dialect word meaning gate. Symonds' Yat, therefore means nothing more exciting than that a cottager of the name Symonds, about 1790, had a gate on top of the rock. Hence the name.

From Symonds' Yat down the gorge of the Wye ; through the quaint old town of Monmouth ; past the ruins of Tintern Abbey, nestling into a fold of the hills, with the river running close beside, and right down to Chepstow, there is a never-ending panorama of beauty. The road follows the

river, which winds and twists between green banks, now spanned by a picturesque bridge, now hidden for a moment behind the trees. I had half thought of spending the night at Tintern—for the smooth lawns of "The Beaufort Arms" right opposite the Abbey, looked inviting. It was too early, however, to call a halt and I decided to push on. But the question of a billet for the night had to be settled, so when I had gone a mile or two south of Tintern, I drew up at the side of the road, climbed a green bank and, with my back against a convenient tree, spread the map on my knees before me. The decision took some time to make—the view before me was so exquisitely lovely that I had hard work to keep my mind on the billeting question. Below me the river flowed smoothly; a fisherman was busily casting for trout. On the opposite bank fat cows browsed, and beyond that the hills rose steeply, with tiny white cottages perched awkwardly here and there. The air was still and warm, and what with the scent of the woods and the drowsy hum of bees at the wild flowers—I came near to falling asleep.

I weighed the respective merits of Chepstow, Newport, Usk and Abergavenny as my halting place for the night—and decided finally on Abergavenny. The name had a sufficiently "foreign" sound about it to make me feel adventurous to be penetrating into the heart of Wales—and, more important still, I knew that there were hills about it which might help to satisfy my hunger for the sight of a real mountain. On the way I passed through Usk, and paused to check over "The Three Salmons"—for future reference, so to speak. For Usk attracted me. It is a sleepy little village on the banks of its own river; a resort for anglers and rest-seekers. It has not always been so placid, for it was once a Roman station and later became of importance by reason of its great Norman castle. All this Welsh borderland, of course, has been the scene of countless battles in centuries gone by and hardly a village but can tell

tales of Roman occupation, of knights in armour and of besieged castles. But to-day the river meanders quietly under the bridge at Usk, and fishermen tell each other their stories over a tankard of ale at "The Three Salmons."

Ten miles further on I came to Abergavenny—and entered another world. High peaks—the more impressive because their summits were shrouded in mist—surround the town. To the south a great bare hillside rising to, perhaps, 1,200 feet; to the north-west "The Sugar Loaf," of whose 1,960 feet the inhabitants speak almost with awe—as of the Mount Robson of these parts! To enter Abergavenny I had to cross a bridge, half of which had just been washed away by floods. Later I went to inspect the damage caused to many houses by recent floods. For the river Usk, which looks so peaceful at the town of Usk, has many times caused grave property damage and loss of life, when it has overflowed its banks.

I put up at "The Angel," an extremely comfortable house—and set out to observe the inhabitants of Abergavenny town parading the main streets, as is the custom on Saturday evening in every self-respecting town in Britain.

The streets were thronged with townsfolk, stores were all open, and housewives carried shopping bags on their arms. The young men from the collieries four miles away, dressed in their best clothes, paraded up and down with their best girls, hailing friends as they passed, and an occasional automobile or horsedrawn cart threaded its way carefully through the crowd. Saturday evening in Abergavenny is still, indeed, much as I imagine it has always been. "Piper's Up-to-Date Bazaar" still announces its presence to the world in a great painted sign; "The Old Bank" building stands where it did—and the Salvation Army's band still blares out hymns on the chief corner in the town. In the beautiful "Bailey Park," too, crowds were out enjoying the summer evening and admiring the fine view of "The Sugar Loaf."

I went into a store to buy some tobacco—and fell into conversation with Mr. Bull, the proprietor. He was lamenting the passing of “the old days” from Abergavenny.

“Great changes here, sir, since the war,” he said. “Once we had many fine old families round here—but the war seemed to break them up. The sons were killed in so many cases—and taxation has closed many of the big houses. I mind when the late Marquis of Abergavenny—a great gentleman he was, sir—used to place a regular order with me for 500 Cabanas—and they must always be in prime condition. There were big house parties then—with folks down from London for the shooting and fishing. But the big houses are closed now—and the good times have gone.”

I turned in early—leaving notice to be called betimes, as I was determined to climb “The Sugar Loaf” in the morning.

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2. When I awoke I found there was a light early morning rain, but that was not going to make me change my plans. Therefore eight o'clock on this Sunday morning found me on my way. I took a white cottage high up on the wooded slope of the “mountain” as my guiding point.

The streets of Abergavenny were almost deserted at that time of day, and once I got outside the town I was soon trudging along narrow lanes clear away from human habitations. The white cottage of the reservoir warden was the last house I passed and when I paused for a breather about 1,200 feet up there was no house or human being anywhere in sight.

The view was one to remember. Abergavenny lay in the middle of the wide valley below, with the Usk passing like a silver ribbon through the centre of it. Beyond the town the hills closed in again, forming a sort of immense door—

the entrance to Wales for possession of which countless battles had been fought in centuries gone by. Far below me down the slope I could hear the rush and swirl of a creak swollen by the recent heavy rains.

Sheep were grazing in the fields near at hand ; bluebells studded the banks of the lane where I rested and from far away came the sound of a church bell. There was hawthorn too—and somehow the delicious perfume of early summer reminded me of the Qu'Appelle valley in Saskatchewan. The hills, though bigger here in Wales, were not unlike the wooded slopes beside the lakes near Fort Qu'Appelle—and the quietness and isolation recalled days there long ago—before the noise of the railroad disturbed its age-old peace. It came on to rain heavily—but one would not get very far from home in Britain if rain were allowed to interfere with one's pleasures ! I trudged on ; now following the bed of a creek ; now crossing the valley to the wooded heights on the other side. I passed through the yard of an old stone farmhouse, but seeing no one about of whom to ask my way, I kept on steadily in what I thought was the direction of the summit of Sugar Loaf. But the top of that monster hill of near 2,000 feet was shrouded in mist—and though I mounted higher and higher I never found the summit !

Someone had told me that I ought to visit Llanthony Abbey before leaving this neighbourhood, so I hastened back to the hotel, changed my soaking clothes, bathed and was soon dressed more or less respectably and on the road by car to find Llanthony. It lay nine miles away and would, I thought, be a good spot for lunch—as I learned there was an inn there.

It was necessary to make several detours, for the bridges had been severely damaged by recent floods. And of this I was glad, for it forced me to take to lovely country lanes instead of keeping to the highroad—and I met little traffic. A few miles out I stopped to pass the time of day with an

old tramp, sitting beside the road eating a crust of bread and cheese which he had unwrapped from a newspaper.

His hair was white and he had several days' growth of beard on his chin. On the end of his nose gold-rimmed spectacles were balanced and he was reading a piece of newspaper in which his lunch had been rolled up. I asked where he was bound for.

"Anywhere at all," said he. "I coom from Bolton, in Lancashire, sir—lookin' for a bit of a job, I am, sir—but I know I'll never get one any more. Once they see the white hairs nowadays there's no chance. And I'm short of old age pension age by a few months, sir. I've 'ad me oops and downs, sir, I can tell you, had me own business once—but I'm pretty near the end of me tether now."

Sixty-five, all but four months (he looked 75) and he had trudged something like 300 miles from Bolton "lookin' for a bit of a job"—and for six weeks he said he hadn't slept in a bed! What tragic tales these unfortunates of the roads could tell! At one time to be a "tramp" in England was to have fallen to the lowest rung of the ladder. They were outcasts, "untouchables," held in contempt because their misfortunes were usually supposed to be their own fault. Only in return for breaking stones in a sort of prison yard could they get a night's lodging at a workhouse.

But it's different to-day. There are, unfortunately, many thousands of "tramps" "on the roads" of England—and other countries—driven to wander homeless, and often foodless, not through any fault of their own but because there is no work for them. All the way from Lancashire to find "a bit of a job" in South Wales!

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3. I feel that I have had a lucky escape. I am still alive—and that is really more than I deserve.

You know what used to happen (in story books at least) to careless people who stumbled into the robbers' secret

hiding place just at the moment when the hoard of gems and gold was being divided. Only their dry bones told the sad tale to later generations.

I cannot help feeling that each of the six elderly people whom I discovered enjoying the unbroken peace of the Vale of Ewyas at Llanthony Abbey must have given some passing thought to the most painless method of exterminating me. For, unwittingly, I had discovered their hiding place—whither they have come every year for eleven years past just to get away from the crowded places of south-east England; to be without trains and buses, or telephone, or even good automobile roads. What business had I, an inquisitive stranger, to go poking along the rough lane into this remote valley, disturbing their quiet—and perhaps going back to “the world” to broadcast news of my discovery! Frankly I sympathise with thoughts like these—but, after all, this is a free country and Llanthony Abbey is a public place—and it’s my job to tell you about it. But please don’t go there if you want to make a noise!

I had set out from Abergavenny, you will remember, about noon on Sunday. I had come by way of narrow lanes and detours—to avoid bridges broken down by the floods—and then for some miles along a rough, twisting road in a valley where a small river bounded and swirled from the hills on its way to the sea. On either side steep hills shut us in. With lowering, grey skies over head, the valley became a place of almost fearsome loneliness. I passed a few farm-houses and an inn for fishermen, and at one point across the valley was a tiny hamlet whose grey cottages seemed to cling precariously to an upright position on the steep slope. The tiny church, with a square tower, seemed to have given up the struggle to maintain its balance, and one end of it was hopeless askew. The hamlet rejoiced in the name of Cym-o-oy I discovered. And I resolved to visit it on my return.

At length, when it seemed the road had reached the

loneliest spot in the British Isles, I came to a crossroads where farm tracks met the road on which I travelled. Great trees overhung the roadway on all sides. The valley had narrowed, the scenery become more wild and the two grey stone cottages on the corner seemed without life, only adding to the feeling of remoteness. On the right was an old stone gateway which appeared to lead into a deserted farmyard. I got out to explore—and found myself in a sort of courtyard where there was a tiny church on one side and a high stone wall on the other. Beyond the wall, gaunt grey ruins towered up towards the sky. Evidently this was Llanthony Abbey—but there was nothing as yet to indicate whether anyone lived there or not. I passed through the gateway and—here, within the ruined walls of the abbey itself, was a substantial old house against the west wall. Smoke was curling up from a chimney, but it was so eerily quiet that even now I thought there must have been some mistake in telling me that one could get lunch at “The Abbey Inn.” There was nothing to indicate an inn. The roofless abbey was carpeted with soft green grass, and rooks cawed as they circled round the walls from which weeds and scrubby wallflowers sprouted.

I went to the first door I could see. It was open and I looked into a great chamber with groined ceiling and stone-flagged floor. On a dresser were rows of shining copper vessels and, below them, a line of pewter plates and tankards. Evidently this was the kitchen, and by its size and the air of activity within, this, after all, must be an inn.

I was told that I could get lunch there and was directed to a door at the top of some steps. This, I found, opened into the house from a wide verandah. On a long table outside were several fishing rods and, beneath it two pairs of fishermen’s “waders.”

Now I pushed open the door and entered a large, old-fashioned room. There were six people there. None of them spoke—but six pairs of eyes were turned towards me. I

felt that the atmosphere was distinctly hostile. I could not decide whether these were guests at this strange inn—or whether I had made some frightful blunder and got into a private house by mistake. One of the elderly ladies of the party was sewing and the others after coolly looking me over returned to their reading, determined evidently to ignore my unwelcome presence. I moved round to the fireplace—wishing devoutly that I could get out of the place without sacrificing all dignity.

One end of the long table was laid for luncheon with a white cloth. There were seven places. Presently the door opened and an enormous joint of veal was placed on the table. All the inhabitants made a move towards the table. No one asked me to sit down—so I moved towards a chair and asked if I should be taking anyone's place if I sat there. No one said anything very definite about this, so I sat down and unfolded a clean serviette which was beside the plate. Then it appeared that the number on the ring of this particular serviette indicated that it belonged to an old gentleman with a white moustache across the table. I apologised and handed it over. He said nothing.

One of the elderly ladies carved the joint—and smiled at me as she passed me my plate. I was grateful for this, and, thus emboldened, asked the maid for a pint of ale. When it arrived in an enormous glass mug I wished to goodness I had made it half a pint—I felt like a heavy-drinking, blundering ploughman in this atmosphere of awesome politeness and frigid reserve.

But I had walked a good seven miles since my early breakfast and was both hungry and thirsty—and later brazenly accepted a second helping of veal. Meanwhile the lady opposite me rather hesitatingly drew me into conversation. None of the others joined in—which was explained when I learned that my friend had only arrived the day before and evidently was not much more welcome there than I was. We found a point of contact, however,

for she had once had a brother—an engineer—who lived in Vancouver.

Yes, sir—that was a grim meal. I was thankful when it was over and I could get out on to the verandah and have a smoke. I was looking at an old faded photograph on the wall showing a certain Father Ignatius surrounded by some Indians—apparently Canadian Indians. To my astonishment the white-haired lady who had carved the veal came out and spoke pleasantly to me. It appeared that every year for eleven years this same party—the three elderly couples—had come to this spot for a quiet holiday. When the ice was broken, my new-found friend proved to be as kind and friendly as could be. She told me that in this remote retreat they had neither gas nor electric light—and not a single bathroom. They dreaded the prospective coming of a bus line to the Vale of Ewyas—for then its peace would be gone. By this time two of the elderly husbands were putting on their waders and equipping themselves with fishing gear. Neither of them spoke to me—and I feared lest the good lady who had thawed out to me might get into trouble later.

THE ENGLISH RIVIERA

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

*We head for the Cornish Riviera to escape the fogs of London—
Exeter gives us shelter for a night, but St. Austell Bay and Fowey
keep us prisoners by their charms.*

1. I WOKE up one morning to find myself sitting bolt upright in bed, tense and terrified, shouting "fire" for all I was worth. Somewhere, quite close at hand, a great bell was booming out its deep notes in the darkness. For a moment I could not think where I was. I didn't care anyhow—the fire was only a nightmare and that was all that mattered.

Then there came a knock at the door, and as I said "come in"—I remembered this was Exeter and the bell which my nightmare had made into a fire bell was the cathedral clock chiming. The maid came in with my early morning tea. I was sitting up in bed—looking as wild-eyed as one does when a bad nightmare is just ended.

"Has anyone attempted to murder the Dean here lately?" I asked her.

She looked startled and nearly dropped the tray.

"Not that I know of, sir," she said.

"I'm surprised to hear it," said I, "when I think of the tortures occupants of this room must have suffered from that cathedral clock."

She went out chuckling at what she thought was a joke. But it wasn't a joke at all. It seemed to me that I had lain awake all night waiting for the next quarter to strike—and I knew that I had lain awake for hours after I went to bed trying to guess the exact moment when the next stroke would come.

I knew also that I had got out of bed half a dozen times in the night and had gazed out of the window at the great black mass of the cathedral towers dimly seen by the light of the lamps in the Close. In front of them the white marble statue of Bishop Hoskyns stood out eerily from the blackness.

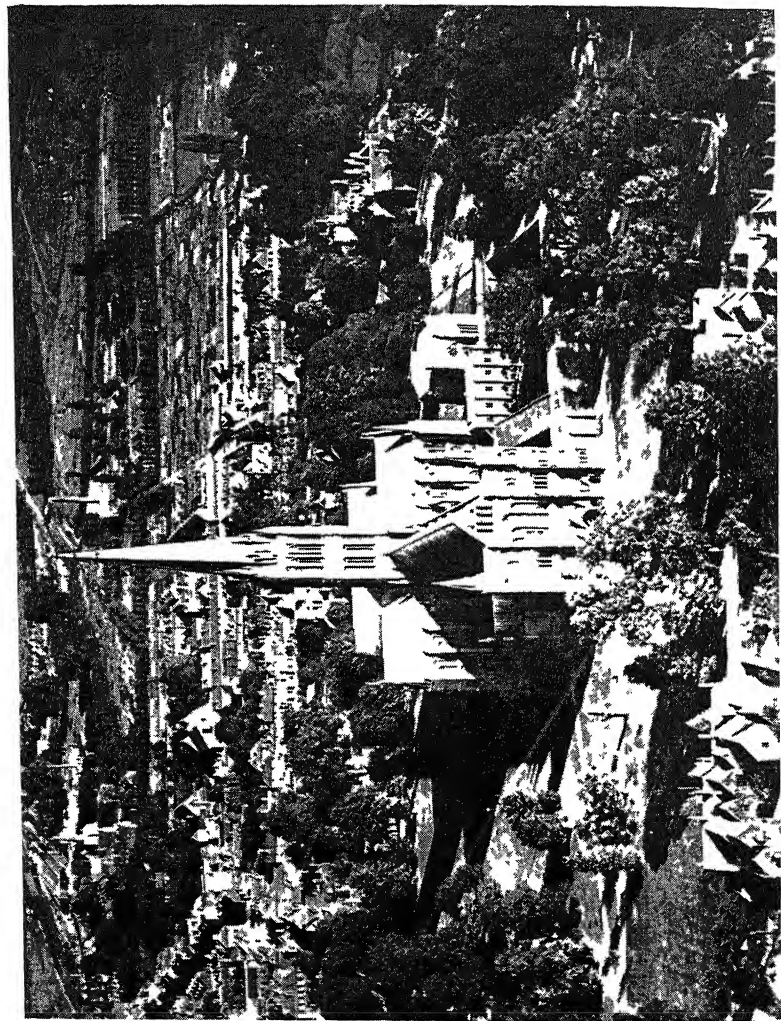
I thought how dreadful it would be to lay violent hands on that fine old figure I had seen in the precincts. I think he was Lord William Cecil, the Bishop of Exeter—and I wished I had had the courage to ask permission to take a snapshot of him.

He had a white beard, wore ecclesiastical leggings on his long, lean legs, fur gloves on his hands and was pushing a bicycle which had one white mudguard behind and a red one in front.

But you will think this really is a nightmare—or the beginning of an Edgar Wallace thriller—unless I explain how I came to be at Exeter!

The fact is that I was on the way to Cornwall for a week's holiday. It had taken me three years of desultory wanderings in England to discover Cornwall. Even now—I confess with shame—I made the discovery more or less under compulsion, so to speak, for I spent a brief winter holiday there during the period when it was not considered patriotic to leave the shores of Britain to seek sunshine in foreign lands.

Frankly, I was sceptical about the charms of this "English Riviera" which had been dinned into our ears more lustily than ever since the "Buy British" campaign had started to scourge us all into a patriotic frenzy. Knowing too well the winter climate of other parts of England, it did not seem reasonable that there should be an area down in the south-west, only 250 miles from the fog and damp of London, where sunshine and clear, soft air could be found even in mid-winter. Of the truth of the claims made for Cornwall's climate and scenic attractions I was soon to learn.



SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE AIR

So on a December day when the sun shone bright and as warm as April for a wonder, with a free week ahead, we loaded up the car with suit-cases, golf clubs, rugs and what-not, turned her head towards Land's End and set out on a voyage of exploration. Plans were vague; our destination indefinite. We would drive so far as we felt inclined the first day and stop at any inn that promised warmth and comfort.

Three miles beyond Guildford, on the top of the Hog's Back—the lovely stretch of perfect road that runs dead straight for ten miles along a ridge of the Downs with glorious views to north and south—we drew the car aside from the road and ate our picnic lunch in the sunshine.

Thereafter, through Farnham; down the steep hill into Winchester; through lovely Salisbury, resisting the longing to linger in the peace of the Cathedral Close; through Shaftesbury, Sherborne and Honiton—and so on to Exeter at dusk to thread our way through narrow streets and draw up outside the portico of the ancient, comfortable and kindly Royal Clarence Hotel.

Since candour has forced me to tell of the sufferings of a disturbed night by reason of the cathedral clock, let me hasten to add that "The Royal Clarence" offers ample compensation for the paltry loss of a few hours' sleep—through no fault of the hotel.

Indeed, I shall go there again when occasion offers—clock or no clock—for "The Royal Clarence" is one of the best inns in England outside of London, and packed to the brim with historic interest and associations. It stands within the Cathedral Close, flanked on one side by Mol's coffee house, the upper room of which is shown to visitors as the place where Drake and his admirals used to foregather to discuss their plans and fight their battles over again.

In point of fact, "The Royal Clarence" was the first inn in England to be called by the French term "hotel," the reason being that its first landlord 160 years ago was

a Frenchman, Peter Berlon by name. Its present proprietor has got together an amazing collection of "antiques," and everywhere the walls are decorated with mediæval blunderbusses, sabres, spears, man-traps, samplers, coats of arms and old prints. While the articles themselves would be interesting enough in a museum, I must confess that they seem a bit out of place in an old English coaching house.

In days gone by, one learns from an advertisement of 1808, that: "The entire new and elegant Royal Balloon Coach on a much improved principle will leave the Hotel every morning at a quarter before 4 o'clock, arriving at the Saracen's Head, Snowhill, London, about noon. Fare inside, £21 12s. 6d.; outside, £11 11s. 6d.; luggage two pence per pound."

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2. Exeter is the only cathedral town I know where at least two inns front on the precincts. For "The Royal Clarence" has a neighbour in "The Globe," an inn so ancient that the date of its foundation has never been established, but which goes back at least 500 years. In an age long past, it is said to have been the "guest house" of the monastery which stood nearby, and certain it is that the lovely oak-panelled chamber which now serves the more prosaic purpose of a bar-parlour, is still known as "The Monks' Parlour."

Whenever I go to Exeter I visit "The Globe" just for the sheer joy of seeing again the exquisite beauty of this room mellowed by the centuries and seeming to preserve in some measure the restful atmosphere of a bygone age. You enter it from the "courtyard"—a glass-roofed enclosure from which, through an old passage with a 400-year-old grilled oak door at the end of it—the streets of the city can be reached. From Roman times, it is said, this passage has been a citizen's right-of-way.

On previous visits to Exeter I had failed to visit the famous old Guildhall—and this time we determined to do so. I paused to read the notices on the board outside the great doorway under the fine stone portico which juts out into the High street. It happened to be December 8th—and from the board I learned that this was the very day for the distribution of “Nicholas Spicer’s charity” (founded hundreds of years ago). Persons qualified to receive donations under this bounty were specified as “poor Freemen, inhabitants of the County and city of Exeter, not having received, or receiving, Parochial relief, of the age of fifty years or upwards. A Preference will be given to decayed tradesmen.”

We pottered about for some time hoping that we might view some “decayed tradesmen”—but, none appearing, we went in and were escorted round the building by a uniformed official rejoicing in the high-sounding title of “Sergeant-at-Mace.” What pride custodians of these ancient buildings of England take in their treasures! How (particularly if you tell them you come from overseas) they love to watch for the look of awe which (if you are tactful) should spread over your features, when you learn, for instance, that “this noble structure was erected in the fourteenth century.” And, indeed, Exeter’s Guildhall is a “noble” building, the centre of a great city’s life for 600 years—so the pride is not out of place. The carved oak wainscoting dates back to 1556, and every one of the hundreds of upper panels is carved with a different design. Then there are fine oil paintings—notably one of Princess Henrietta, daughter of Charles I, by Sir Peter Lely, which, our guide informed us, with becoming impressiveness, was insured for £20,000 (\$100,000). Then he pointed to the flags of the dominions hanging from the roof, given to the city in recognition of hospitality shown to dominion troops during the war. (Exeter, by the way, has a direct connecting link with

Ottawa in that here, in the studio of Henry Hems, sculptor, the Speaker's chair which adorns the Canadian House of Commons, was made.)

One could well spend a week exploring Exeter and its treasures and historic buildings, but as we were determined to make Penzance or somewhere in that neighbourhood before nightfall, we had to hurry away.

By way of Stourbridge and Launceston—in order to avoid the danger of winter fogs on Dartmoor—we made our way, and somewhere just short of Launceston, we crossed the River Tamar and entered Cornwall. It is extraordinary how each of England's little counties seems to preserve its own peculiar characteristics not only of people, manners, speech and custom, but actually of physical features—as though the Almighty deliberately set bounds to each peculiar variety of landscape. At all events, though Devon and Cornwall are always linked together, and though they have much in common, you cannot penetrate far into the duchy of Cornwall before you realise that you are in a new country. The road twists and winds up hill and down dale, leading you in and out of quaint villages, all built of grey-brown Cornish granite, with grey slate roofs to the cottages, giving them such an air of oneness with the landscape that it seems they must have been there since time began.

The very signposts enhance the illusion that you are in some foreign country. Here names of all sorts of strange saints, hitherto unheard of, who have given their names to villages and towns—St. Neat, St. Wenn, St. Erme, St. Blazey and a host of others which make you realise that the Cornish people trace their origins in the dim past to different stock from the rest of Britain. Legend has it that the first Cornish settlers migrated thence from Armenia in "the greater Asia" not long after the Tower of Babel, and the beginnings of Christianity undoubtedly came from Ireland. Certain it is that there is a hint of southern blood

in the Cornishman. His speech is rapid, his voice musical and he is steeped in mystic lore and superstition engendered by centuries of comparative isolation from the rest of the world. So Cornwall is full of weird legends and fantastic tales of pixies on the moors, of saints who came from over the seas floating on mill-stones and of giants whose mighty deeds have no counterpart in matter-of-fact England.

Inland, as you go further westward, Cornish scenery is not to be compared with Devon. Launceston, the old-time Cornish capital, set on its twin hills, where the River Tamar circles round beneath the old castle walls, is lovely enough, but beyond, through Bodmin and Redruth the country is often bare and bleak. Around Redruth and Cambourne you find yourself in a mining country and all the landscape is dotted with great white slag heaps from the china clay mines; the mud of the roads is white and along the roads you meet miners whose clothes and faces are streaked with the chief product of the county.

Penzance was our destination—but whether because the hotels we inspected seemed uninviting, or because it seemed too “ordinary,” too much like a watering-place along the Sussex coast, we decided that Penzance was not for us. We headed for St. Ives and, threading our way along high-banked lanes, we came to a broad highway, from which we turned aside into the driveway of “The Tregenna Castle Hotel.”

Below us as we looked to the north, were myriad twinkling lights, those to the west (as we learned later) from the picturesque village of St. Ives itself, and those far out to the north-east, where the beam from a lighthouse flashed, from hundreds of fishing vessels—reminding us of the Bay of Fundy or the mouth of the Fraser river.

* * * * *

3. When you arrive at a place after darkness has fallen there is always a moment when you look out

of the window in the morning to take stock of your surroundings.

We had arrived at "The Tregenna Castle" long after dark, so that apart from the imposing turreted outline of the hotel and the twinkling lights far below we could only conjecture that the view would be worth seeing by daylight. We were not disappointed, for we found that the hotel stood in a park on a hill 300 feet above the harbour and that from the windows one could see far out to sea and along the rugged coast and could see the white foam of the breakers on the rocks guarded by the Godrevy Lighthouse.

Many years ago—I think under the tutelage of the hard-hearted son of the soil in Canada who attempted to make me into an efficient "hired man"—I formed the reprehensible habit of getting up betimes in the morning. So now—being on holiday and bent on getting all the exercise and fresh air I could—I was on the road exploring long before most of the guests at the hotel were astir. I resisted the temptation to walk straight down the road towards St. Ives, and chose instead a narrow lane which led up a hill at the back in the direction of a strange looking steeple on the summit. From there I thought I should get the best view of St. Ives. The high-walled lane wound about like a corkscrew until I thought I should never reach the steeple, but at last I arrived there, and turned to take my first comprehensive view of St. Ives Bay. It was worth waiting for, for from this eminence I could see the little town clustering round the tiny harbour, the fishing boats high and dry on the sand inside the stone jetty, and still my range of vision took in the Godrevy light and the rocky brown cliffs beyond.

I started down the hill by another route determined to explore the village itself. The lane led me by way of Porthmeor Beach, and I reached the harbour through a labyrinth of the most extraordinary narrow little streets

I had seen anywhere in England—for these tiny alleys reminded me of the back streets in Marseilles or Palma. In most of them there was no possible room for two cars or carts to pass, and nearly all the houses were entered by flights of steps or stone stairs direct from the street. As for cats—they were everywhere—battalions of them.

From the quay came a pungent odour of fresh fish mixed with tar and seaweed. On the quayside I found hundreds of cases of herrings from the fishermen's night haul; they were packed ready for shipment to London, and fisherwomen were just coming out of the kippering plants after handling the catch. In the tiny protected basin there must have been a hundred little fishing vessels all high and dry on the sand, for the tide goes far out beyond the pier. Gulls in hundreds were circling round in the sunshine screeching as they sought their morning feed. As I tramped up the long hill I paused a dozen times to look back on the entrancing view of the town—and I realised why a whole colony of artists had established themselves here in St. Ives, and why in almost every art gallery of note, all over the world, there is at least one picture of this lovely spot. At one point in my walk I looked down on the shining expanse of Porthminster Sands—so clean and enticing and completely sheltered from winds from the open sea. The railway station in the foreground looked for all the world like part of a child's toy outfit. If I turned to the east there was the symmetrical curve of Carbis Bay shut in by rugged brown cliffs with bright green fields stretching back from their summit.

On another day when a stiff breeze blew in from the broad Atlantic I walked again to Porthmeor beach and made my way out to a rocky headland for the joy of seeing the great seas hurl themselves against the rocks and to feel the clean salt spray on my face. That day I made my way again up to the strange steeple above "The Tregenna Castle Hotel" for I had learned something of the story

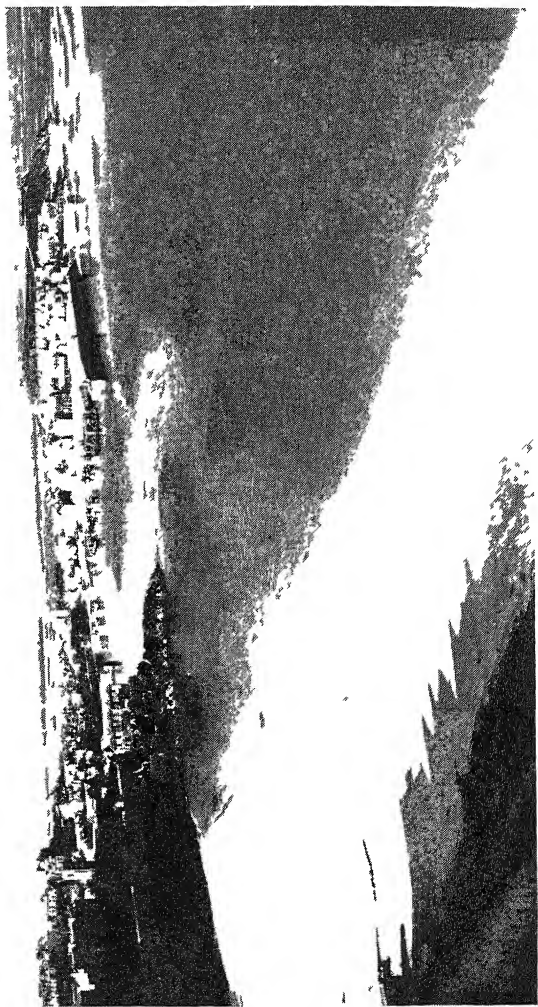
of it. It appeared that one John Knill was mayor of St. Ives in 1766 and, although he lived later in London and died there, by a clause in his will he directed that once in every five years on the Feast Day of St. John the Apostle, ten girls, all natives of St. Ives, dressed in white and accompanied by "two respectable widows" and a fiddler should dance around his monument and also sing the Old Hundredth psalm. On condition that these terms were fulfilled he left a sum of money for the use of the town. So for 154 years this strange ceremony has been carried out and in 1931 it attracted a great company of sightseers from far and near.

St. Ives lies in a sheltered bay on the northern side of the peninsula which is Cornwall. It is not, therefore, strictly on "the English Riviera." Nevertheless its climate is astonishingly mild compared with London, and although it was December, in the beautiful shrubbery through which a path wanders from the hotel to the town there were hydrangeas still in bloom and fields of anemones in flower within half a mile.

We had only three days to spend in this delightful place—but we felt it was a duty to see Land's End before we turned eastward again.

So one day, when the sky was overcast, but the air was soft and mild, we set out on this expedition. We drove first to Porthleven, ten miles east of Penzance, to pick up a friend. Unless you take to the byways you will assuredly miss half the beauties of Cornwall—and we were glad that chance led us to Porthleven, for from the sea-front of the little town, tucked away in a sheltered "combe," there were marvellous views of the coastline in both directions.

At Marazion we stopped to admire the view of St. Michael's Mount, the great rock surmounted by the mansion (one-time monastery) which is the residence of Lord St. Levan. It stands to the eastern side of Mount's Bay—



ST IVES, " THE LITTLE TOWN CLUSTERING ROUND THE TINY HARBOUR ,
THE FISHING BOATS HIGH AND DRY ON THE SANDS INSIDE THE JFTTY

[Facing p 173

an island at high tide, but joined to the mainland by a narrow causeway when the tide is out. At dusk, when we returned, it presented an impressive, massive silhouette with its turrets and towers standing out against the darkening sky.

In Penzance we stopped to ask a policeman the way.

"What sort of place is Land's End?" I asked him.

"What sort of place?" he echoed, "solitude—lonely—yes, suicidal sort of place I should say at this time of year," he said lugubriously.

But we were not to be deterred, and in due course came to the westernmost point of England. We had tea at the hotel which stands on the summit of the cliff looking out towards the Longships Light. Later we walked out to the edge of the precipice and looked down on the jagged fantastic-shaped rocks for ever drenched with spray from the great Atlantic rollers as they hurl themselves against the stout shores of England. The sun was sinking towards the horizon like a great ball of fire and the beam from the Longships light was flashing out its warning over the dark, heaving waters as we turned away from this spectacle of majestic beauty.

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4. We had never heard of St. Austell Bay until we made some new friends at "The Tregenna Castle." It is my custom always to give my address in an hotel register as "Vancouver, Canada"—for you never know when you will meet someone who knows Canada or who has relatives or friends there. Thus it happened that soon after we had taken up our abode at "The Tregenna Castle" at St. Ives, a handsome, grey-haired man approached me and asked if I was the newcomer from Vancouver. When I told him I was—he asked if I happened to know his "young brother" who was a Church of England parson there. It happened that I knew him very well—but having always

regarded him with a respect amounting almost to awe, I was somewhat shocked at the irreverence of referring lightly to him as "my young brother."

At all events, it was from this new-found friend that we heard of "The St. Austell Bay Hotel." Learning that it stood on the edge of the cliffs far away from any town; that it was new and really up-to-date—and possessed that much-to-be-desired but seldom-found comfort—steam heat—we decided that St. Austell should be our next port of call.

One day, therefore, we drove by way of Redruth and Truro to St. Austell intending to lunch there and, if we liked the place, to stay there. Ten minutes' wandering in the hotel grounds overlooking the marvellous, restful beauty of Carlyon Bay, and a brief inspection of the comfort of the hotel itself, decided us to "park" there for the remainder of our brief holiday.

An hour later found me, equipped with my old bag of golf clubs, beating a ball unmercifully over the eighteen-hole course which runs along the top of the cliffs. Partly because I am a rotten player anyway, and partly because I was more interested in the views of rocky headlands, brown cliffs and stretches of sheltered smooth sands, than in golf, I sliced a ball so badly at the third hole that it went soaring over the cliff down to the sands 100 feet below. The cliff looked easy and I started to climb down after the ball. Two minutes later I wished I had let the beastly thing go. I found myself slithering down an almost perpendicular precipice of shifting shale, grabbing wildly at prickly gorse bushes which tore my hands and filled the flesh with tiny, sharp thorns. Even then I could not find the ball! But the golf mattered not at all; the wind blew from the sea; the turf was soft and green as could be and there wasn't a street car or a racketing motor-cycle within miles to disturb the unbroken peace.

Twilight was falling when we reached the hotel again; lights were twinkling in the windows; out to sea we

could catch a glimpse now and then of the lights from some ship passing down the English Channel, and far away to the south-east there was the gleam from the Eddystone Lighthouse.

That night, tired with a five-mile walk in this bracing air, I slept soundly with my bedroom window wide open to the sea breezes, and awoke at dawn to the shrill screechings of seagulls hunting their breakfast down on the beach below. My before-breakfast walk took me far enough along the cliffs to discover, hidden away in a little cove, a tiny harbour where two small vessels were tied up in the shelter of the stoutly-protected basin. I determined to explore this harbour further at leisure—and found that the ships were the *Adelaar*, of Rotterdam, and *Atlantic*, of Grummingen, docked here to load china clay, the chief product of all this part of Cornwall.

Looking down on the tiny port from the steep hill above it, Charlestown looked for all the world like a child's toy. The turning basin, inside the stone jetty, looked so small that a rowboat might have had difficulty in turning. But for all that above the door of a substantial stone house overlooking the lock was written the imposing legend "Dock Master," and underneath "Capitaine du Basin." I discovered later that half the countries of Europe send ships to this and other south Cornish harbours to take on loads of china clay.

Determined to know more of this business, I went one day to a china clay drying plant in the village and (piloted, by the way, by old Mr. Alfred Tregonning who has a son happily settled at Oshawa, Ont.), I learned something of the process employed. The clay is dug out of the pits some miles away back in the hills. In some cases it is filtered two or three times, dried and pressed there to be sent by lorries to the ship's side. In other cases (as in that of the dry kiln I visited), the clay is piped in liquid form from the hills to the dry kilns by the sea, there to settle in great

vats and then to be tended by men who wade knee-high in the thick slime, smoothing it out as it comes from the trollies, later cutting it into oblong blocks. Finally it is shot down steep chutes into the hold of vessels lying at the dock.

A path wound on up over the cliff from Charlestown, and presently I was descending a steep declivity into another little rock-bound bay. This was Porthpean, I found, and seated on a green-painted seat in front of a boathouse were half a dozen village worthies, sunning themselves and gossiping. Three of them wore the rough blue sweaters of fishermen and two of them were old, white-whiskered men who leaned forward over their sticks.

"Which way do you go to the main street here?" I asked.

"Main street?" said one of the younger ones. "Never heard of any main street hereabouts."

"Well is there a pub, where I can get a glass of beer?" I pursued.

"Mister," said another of them, "this here be the Land of 'ope and Glory—no pubs, no police, no parsons. There's no beer and no main street either."

* * * * *

5. On another day we made an expedition to Fowey (pronounced "Foy") seven miles from St. Austell. It is the chief port of these parts, and has been made famous as "Troy Town" in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's novel of that name. Fowey is the most picturesque little sea-side town imaginable. Among its inhabitants it boasts Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (better known perhaps as "Q") and Sir Gerald du Maurier, the actor, whose house stands hard by the Bodinnick Ferry.

But the chief family at Fowey are the Treffrys, who have lived in the town for more than 900 years in unbroken line. "Place House," their ancestral home, is a Tudor

mansion (parts of it dating from the fifteenth century) which is just behind the old church which is dedicated to a certain St. Fimbarrus. Legend says that "St. Finn Barr" crossed the Cornish peninsula from Ireland on his way to Rome in the sixth century. There are memorials and monuments in the church to the Treffry family going back for many centuries.

The history of Fowey is known with more or less accuracy as far back as 1100—but undoubtedly a settlement existed here long before that, and in any case from this little port more than 800 men-at-arms set sail for the Second Crusade in the Holy Land. Its charter of Municipal Rights was granted in the reign of Henry II, long before London and many another great city of to-day, reached such a status. The foundations of some noted Cornish families were laid by ships which sailed from Fowey with Drake and Raleigh to the Spanish Main and the Indies in the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth. In later days, down by Bodinnick Ferry, so legend says, King Charles I narrowly escaped being shot as he stood looking across the river. Like the rest of Cornwall, Fowey was staunchly Royalist in the Civil War and at Lostwithiel, a few miles away, the Parliamentary army under the Earl of Essex was soundly defeated by King Charles.

Walking about the narrow streets we came abreast of the Bodinnick Ferry and glanced across the narrow harbour. We were astonished to see four large freight vessels anchored in the channel. It seemed amazing that vessels of seven or eight thousand tons could enter this narrow river-harbour and anchor in deep water so close to the houses that they seemed to tower above them.

It was a sad day when we had to leave the peace and beauty of St. Austell Bay and the comfort of one of the finest hotels of the kind in England and turn homewards. In one week spent in Cornwall we had discovered a land undreamed-of before—a land whose scenic charms are

like no other part of England; whose winter climate is so soft and balmy that it is hard to realise it is only 250 miles from London's damp and fogs; where mid-December habitually sees roses, hydrangeas and anemones still in bloom; where palm trees and exotic shrubs give the gardens at least a semblance of the winter in southern lands, and where the grandeur of England's rocky shores is seen at its best. We had seen enough, indeed, to make us register a vow to come back to Cornwall when more time was available to enjoy its manifold delights.

Unfortunately, of the tens of thousands of English people who, in normal times, go to the south of France for several weeks in mid-winter, not five per cent have ever been to Cornwall. It is to them almost a foreign country. Cornish towns like Penzance, St. Ives and Newquay advertise in a desultory sort of way—but the fact is patent that they have failed to get their message home to the thousands of people in crowded south-eastern England who might be induced to go there if they knew what the country had to offer. Under the influence of the "Buy British" campaign, they have made greater efforts than ever before to promote a "winter season"—but despite all the sudden flood of propaganda, I found great hotels, with every comfort, almost empty of guests and with poor bookings ahead—except for the Christmas and New Year holiday weeks. At Penzance, for instance, as also at Torquay, over the county border in South Devon, several of the larger hotels were almost deserted and bookings for late January, February and March were such that their proprietors could find little cause for optimism in the outlook.

For my part—as a visitor seeking rest and quiet—I like the Cornish winter as it is. But if I were a hotel proprietor there I should not be content until all England—and the continent too—knew what I had to offer! But that's none of my business, perhaps!

Tourist attractions do not, by any means, exhaust the possibilities of extending trade in Cornwall. There must be opportunities there—particularly under the new protective tariffs recently introduced—to develop an enormous trade in cut flowers, early vegetables and bulbs. Every year England imports cut flowers to the value of £1,250,000 (\$6,250,000); onions worth more than £2,000,000 (\$10,000,000) and foreign bulbs to the value of several more millions. Here, one would imagine, is a field of endeavour which might make Cornwall one of the most prosperous parts of England. For there are countless sheltered valleys and hillsides where such necessities might be grown to perfection. In all our wanderings in Cornwall I do not recall seeing any signs of an extensive glasshouse industry—and even apart from glass, it is said that Cornish bulbs flower from seven to ten days earlier than their Dutch competitors.

Thinking of these apparently neglected opportunities I recalled a friend of mine who lives on one of the islands in the Gulf of Georgia. There, in a climate very similar to that of Cornwall, this man grows bulbs under glass by the hundreds of thousands and ships the blooms early in the New Year to the great stores of Toronto and Montreal. Surely, I said to myself, if daffodils can be shipped in winter 3,000 miles across the Canadian prairies, it ought to be possible to build up a great trade between Cornwall and London's inexhaustible market.

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EAST ANGLIA

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

*I hear tales of Romance and Daring of long ago—Lingard
Ranson summons the ghosts of Lavenham to teach me history—
and so to Chelsworth, an unspoiled hamlet in Suffolk.*

1. I HAD been staying a night in a village near Sudbury, just over the Essex border in Suffolk. As I left on the return journey to London, I paused by the side of the road to consult the map. A signpost just ahead caught my eye. To the left it read "Lavenham, Monk's Eleigh, Chelsworth."

Lavenham? The name sounded familiar, and for the moment I racked my brain to recall what I knew about it. Then I remembered—and at once headed the car down the byroad towards it. I remembered that a year or two ago an old friend of mine in Canada—a Suffolk man—had written me an indignant letter. He had enclosed a cutting which stated that some of the old timbered buildings in Lavenham had been dismantled and sent away to be re-erected elsewhere, presumably in the United States, as exhibits of mediæval architecture. My friend had been exceedingly wroth about it—if it were true—which he doubted. He demanded that when occasion offered I should make a pilgrimage to Lavenham to check up the facts. While I was about it, he said, I should drive five miles further on to the hamlet of Chelsworth, his old home, and see the loveliest spot in England!

"You think you know England," he wrote scornfully, "but you don't until you have seen Suffolk."

Well—obviously this was the opportunity to visit Lavenham. I left the main highway and by pleasant

country roads, twisting this way and that like the course of a river; up and down with grassy banks on either side; crossing bridges over meandering, rush-lined streams—came at length in sight of a mighty square church tower standing out far above the tops of the great beech trees which abound hereabouts. Never had I seen a country church tower of such proportions. The whole building, inside and out, was like a miniature cathedral, convincing evidence of the one-time wealth of the district.

I drove down into the village along a wide, silent street where the houses bulged this way and that, overhung the sidewalk or leaned backwards with windows and doors slightly awry. Then past an ancient inn—"The Swan"—whose enormously high gateway and the yard beyond spoke of days when the coach would come clattering down the street to swing under the archway, what time the ostlers dashed out to change horses. And so down Water Street to stop and marvel at the splendour of the black and white timbers of the Wool Hall, at the corner of Lady Street; up Lady Street itself, to pull up finally opposite the ancient Guildhall.

I had seen enough to realise that Lavenham was no place to rush through without stopping to explore its treasures. I must find someone who knew something of its history, or who could tell me where I could get a guide book. The corner shop, a tailor's primarily, caught my eye because in the window were some fine photographs of the village. Ranson was the name above the window. A youngish man was behind the counter when I entered.

"Good morning," said I, "may I ask if you have lived here long?"

"My family, sir, has lived here for 400 years," was the astounding reply, delivered without boastfulness, but with becoming pride. Evidently I need look no

further for a man with local knowledge. If this proud fellow didn't know his Lavenham, no one would. Mr. Ranson (for he it was) produced a guide book of which he himself was part author. His family, it appeared, had been among those who had come to England from Flanders in the time of Edward III about A.D. 1340, to teach the English folk the art of weaving and spinning their wool into cloth. For all those generations the Ransons had been tailors and clothiers, and the twin hobbies of this scion of the family were photography and local history—at both of which he was an adept.

From Lingard Ranson and his book I learned of the checkered history of Lavenham and its neighbouring villages. How 400 years ago great wealth had come to the district with the wool trade; of the munificence of Sir Thomas Spring, first of the great wool magnates, who had joined forces with John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford, to build the magnificent church I had already seen. I listened with quickened pulse while this descendant of men who had played their part in England's history four centuries ago told me with flashing eye of the adventures, tragedies and triumphs of the noble line of "fighting Veres."

The tiny tailor's shop, the shelves of cloth samples and stacks of films and photographs became transformed as the thrilling tale of John de Vere was unfolded. I saw his father and elder brother executed in 1462. I followed him to the Tower five years later—accused of conspiring with the Lancastrians; I shared his vengeful triumph when, in the following year, free once more, John de Vere passed sentence of death on John Tiploft, Earl of Worcester, who had condemned his father and brother to the block. I visioned his capture of St. Michael's Mount, in Cornwall; the siege and his surrender; imprisonment again; the escape after three years when "he lyepe the wallys and wente to the dyke and into the dyke to

the chynne (chin)." I was with him, too, at Bosworth Field in 1485 and was among the crowd of cheering henchmen who welcomed him back in triumph with all his old, and many new, honours thick upon him.

Such tales of romance; such stories of reckless daring; such lavish display of wealth as I heard of in that tiny shop of Lingard Ranson! They sent me out to explore the old buildings with a feeling that 1933 must be a dream—that, in reality, we were back in the days when chivalry was in flower and feudalism not yet defunct.

* * * * *

2. I passed out of Lingard Ranson's shop in the Market Square at Lavenham into the bright sunlight, my mind full of stirring tales of the local heroes of long ago. The little tailor shop had been full, this half hour, of visions of knights in armour; of gory battlefields; of grim dungeons or prison courtyards where the block stood ready for its victim in the centre; of triumphant returns to honour and power.

The contrast between my thoughts and the dead stillness of this market square was almost startling. There was no one in sight; my old car was the only vehicle in the street. It seemed impossible that this sleepy village had known days when its streets were filled with men in armour; that it had been packed with cheering throngs when Queen Bess had honoured Sir William Spring with a visit in 1578—what time there had been to greet her "two hundred young gentlemen cladde all in white velvet coates, three hundred of the graver sort apparrelled in black velvet coates with fifteen hundred serving men more on horsebacke well and bravely mounted to receive the Queen's highnesse into Suffolk."

There, across the street, stood the old, black-timbered Guild Hall, a pathetic reminder of the glories of days long past. Once upon a time this splendid building, with

its carved corner pillars and latticed windows, was the meeting place of the powerful wool merchants and the home of one of the most influential cloth guilds. Through the great oaken doorway had passed kings and queens with all the panoply of state; merchant princes who had helped to build England's commercial greatness. Later, martyrs and criminals had been hustled through its portals into the dungeon below, while fanatical mobs had howled at them from the market square; still later, tramps had sought shelter there when the fine old building had come down in the world and had been turned into a "workhouse."

Though it has been renovated, you can see, still in their original places, the fine beams which support the massive frame; the broad floorboards of good English oak; the steep staircase and the dungeon where many a criminal and some martyrs suffered torture before, perhaps, death ended their sufferings. In that grim brick chamber they will show you the niches in the wall where prisoners were chained, forced to balance themselves in sitting posture on a ledge a few inches wide. There is the slit into which a victim's head was thrust when the dreaded thumb-screw was applied; in one corner is the spot where the whipping post stood. In this place of barbarous memories, Suffolk's most famous martyr, the Rev. Rowland Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh, spent his last night before being burned at the stake on Aldham Green.

But these thoughts are too sombre for a bright summer's day. Let us go down Lady Street to the old Wool Hall, one of the buildings which was taken down brick by brick and beam by beam, and hauled away by lorry to London town. For the story that my friend in Canada had heard was true. The Wool Hall and its contemporary, the Shooting Lodge, were indeed sold and pulled down. But they were rescued. The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings stepped in. The sale was counter-

manded and the ancient houses were restored to their former site. So skilfully was the work of replacement done that, to the unpractised eye at least, there is nothing to show that this noble building has so suffered from the hands of irreverent destroyers. To-day it serves as a convalescent home for the wives and daughters of railway men and, from its galleried hall to its quiet flag-stoned garden at the back, it looks as though destined for another 400 years of usefulness.

As I made my way down Water Street, I passed a number of people of both sexes carrying pails of water, suspended from a frame over the shoulders. I thought something must have gone wrong with the water supply. But I soon learned that Lavenham has no such modern contraption as a central water supply. None of the houses have water laid on from a main—because the only main is the open cistern which is fed by a spring in the hill near the town. Nor is there electric light in the village—gas lamps in the streets and oil lamps and candles in most houses are the only source of artificial light. It may be inconvenient for the villagers to be without these modern conveniences, but to the casual visitor the idea of electric light in a fourteenth century Flemish weaver's cottage whose front is tilted at an angle of thirty degrees seems incongruous!

My objective this time was the house of Mr. Tom Garrard, once, probably, the shooting lodge of the de Vere family. This house was once regarded as one of the finest examples of English mediæval architecture in existence—but some of its glory has departed since, like its neighbour the Wool Hall, it was torn down and shipped away on lorries. The Wool Hall, however, was the luckier of the two, for whereas it came back almost complete, important portions of the de Vere house never came back from their journeyings. But at least the front of the house, with the carved pillars of the doorway, ornamented

beams and fine gables, has been replaced. At one time in the interior, which has been much altered, was to be seen one of the finest "king posts" to be found anywhere. The "king post" was often a feature of mediæval houses of the better class. On it was concentrated the chief burden of the house, and from it radiated, fan-wise, curved beams supporting the upper portions. The same principle is to be seen in the central pillar of the Hall of Fame in the Ottawa Parliament Buildings.

The removal of these houses was, not unnaturally, a sore point with inhabitants of Lavenham for a long time. But while they may rail at the "vandals" who would remove these ancient buildings from their proper surroundings, most people will sympathise with the owners of them when tempting offers are made for their purchase. Mr. Garrard has suffered criticism because he sold his old house in Water Street for removal, but in fairness, it must be said that he refused more tempting offers from the United States, being determined that such a gem should not, at least, leave England. Indeed, possession of such a house as this must be a liability rather than an asset. The cost of upkeep must be heavy—and if the owner should allow it to fall into disrepair the wrath of the community would fall on him. Likewise, if he wants to sell what is his own, the matter becomes one for intervention by a public society—quite properly, no doubt, but none the less an irritating restriction on the freedom of the owner to do what he likes with his own.

* * * * *

3. I told you that I intended to drive five miles beyond Lavenham to visit the old home of a friend of mine in Canada. Well, here I am—at a tiny hamlet called Chelsworth in what must surely be the remotest part of Suffolk. I have drawn the car to the side of the road so as to set down these notes while I am still in the atmosphere of

this hardly believable place. I say "hardly believable"—because, unless you go poking about in such a county as this, you would scarcely credit that, in this age, even England possessed places so unspoiled and untouched by the hand of time.

The village seems to consist of about a dozen houses. There is one store, a garage, a solid old farmhouse, a church that looks as though it had fallen out of a child's toy-box, an ancient gabled cottage called "The Grange" (about the loveliest thing of the kind I have ever seen) and one or two large country houses round about. I daresay there are more farms tucked away somewhere, and, for all I know, some more shops—but right where I am sitting seems to be the centre of this metropolis.

I have been up to "The Hall" where my old Vancouver friend spent his boyhood—and the present owner (by a strange coincidence a one-time resident of Vancouver) has been showing me round his lovely place. But I will come to that later. . . .

I reached this village that time seems to have forgotten, an hour or two ago (one loses count of time in a district like this where nothing seems to have changed since Queen Anne sat on the throne). A mile or so back I passed the sleepy little village of Monk's Eleigh, stopping to watch a cricket match between two teams of small boys, in a field outside the village. I don't know what the occasion was, but there were scores of kiddies of both sexes. A few of them watched the game, but most of them seemed to be stuffing themselves with lemonade and eatables in the pavilion. Probably it was the annual school-treat or something. Monk's Eleigh consists of one long, picturesque street, and, since I saw not a living soul as I came through, I take it that the whole population must have been on the cricket field.

As I approached Chelsworth I spotted the tower of the church peeping through the trees on my right. I stopped



THE OLD GUILD HALL AT LAVENHAM



“ . AN ANCIENT GABLED COTTAGE AT CHELSWORTH THE
LOVELIEST I HAVE EVER SEEN ”

[Facing p. 191

at the garage to enquire my way to "The Hall"—and, rounding a sharp bend in the road, I pulled up at this spot and thought I would do a bit of exploring before I paid my call. There was a sign on a farmyard wall which said "To the Church," pointing through a gate into a pretty garden. I found my way led me right past the front door of the old cottage I mentioned just now. How shall I describe it? Over the porch is the date "1689." It has latticed windows, down near the ground; it leans slightly forward; old black timbers sprawl anglewise across the whitewashed upper walls. There are seats on either side of the tiny porch and the door is a heavy oak affair that looks as though it could withstand a battering-ram. In front of it there is a triangular garden bright with flowers and at the back a smooth lawn with a glorious herbaceous border all round. The churchyard is just over the wall, and everywhere there are trees, trees, trees—mighty elms, delicate beeches and chestnuts. If there is any more perfect spot in England I have yet to come across it.

Naturally I had to go into the church—and to have a word with the old chap cutting the churchyard hay with a scythe. Then there came a girl in blue who said she was on her way to take choir practice—and, of course, I chatted with her also. Across the road, outside the old farmhouse, stood an elderly man with his hands in his pockets and wearing a panama hat. I found that he was Philip Gage, farmer, church-warden and (as I subsequently discovered) a much-respected citizen of these parts.

We talked—and I asked if he could remember my friend in Canada. At that his face lighted up with a beaming smile. Of course, he remembered him—and his father before him, up at "The Hall." Why—hadn't he been people's warden for twenty years when "the old Colonel" had been vicar's warden? Yes, indeed, he remembered them all very well. Just to prove how good was his

memory, he told me a story about the time when the river was in flood close by, and the coachman from "The Hall," who was driving a horse and trap, had tumbled the whole outfit into the swollen stream. That was the time when he had got a boat hurriedly, lassoed the horse and brought it, and the coachman, safely to land. "You tell Master Tom—about that—he'll remember right enough," he said.

Then I had made my way up to "The Hall." It stands in a typical English park—the house only forty years old or so—but already beginning to melt into the landscape as these English houses do. We had tea in the library—an exquisitely beautiful room, panelled with natural-colour waxed oak and the shelves lined with hundreds of leather-backed volumes. Through the wide windows we looked out on a broad sweep of lawn, unbroken by any obtrusive flower-beds—which none but the very rich can afford to keep up on a big scale in England to-day, even if they wanted them. For my part the great expanse of green lawn and the sloping park, dotted here and there with a glorious feathery beech tree, was more satisfying than any formal flower garden.

Between the garden, proper, and the park was the fishpond—really a widening in the stream held up by a dam. There were willow trees by the banks and a seat—a cool retreat for a hot summer day. We walked round later to the herbaceous border. A wide pathway of lawn ran between two deep beds full of bright flowers—sweet williams, delphiniums, clarkia and a host of other "old-fashioned" flowers. Behind them were copper beeches, willows and syringas—just coming to maturity and, as my host pointed out, all planted by my old friend's father.

"Tell Tom, for me," he said, "that all the beauty you see here we owe to his father's care and thought. Tell him about that elm over there—forty feet high now, but planted by his father."

LONDON

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Two spots in London to which the thoughts of millions turn every day in the year—Parliament Square where the heart of a nation throbs—And the Cenotaph where Britain pays homage to its dead.

I. I WONDER if there's another spot in the world where there is concentrated so much of what one might call "the heart of a nation" as here—in Parliament Square.

Half an hour ago I paused by this seat, in the pathway that runs not far behind the great bronze statue of Disraeli, to watch a messenger boy giving the remains of his lunch to the fat pigeons waddling about at his feet. He told me that every day he saved one slice for them. Presently the boy moved off, pushing his cycle with the big delivery basket on the handlebars. I meant to go, too—but the sun was warm—the seat inviting—and I just sat down to watch the swirl and rush of life go by.

A wonderful spot this! Right opposite me, in the direction where Disraeli is looking, is the square tower of St. Margaret's, Westminster. Presently a happy bride and groom will come from under the shabby old red-and-white awning across the sidewalk. Just to the right of the church tower I can see the people coming and going in and out of the north door of the Abbey. Above the open door is the great rose window of wonderful stained glass. The Abbey towers, shining white in the sunshine, are visible through the trees to the right again. I wonder how many thousands pass in and out of the abbey every day? The huge figure of Abraham Lincoln standing

there beside his chair, watches all their comings and goings.

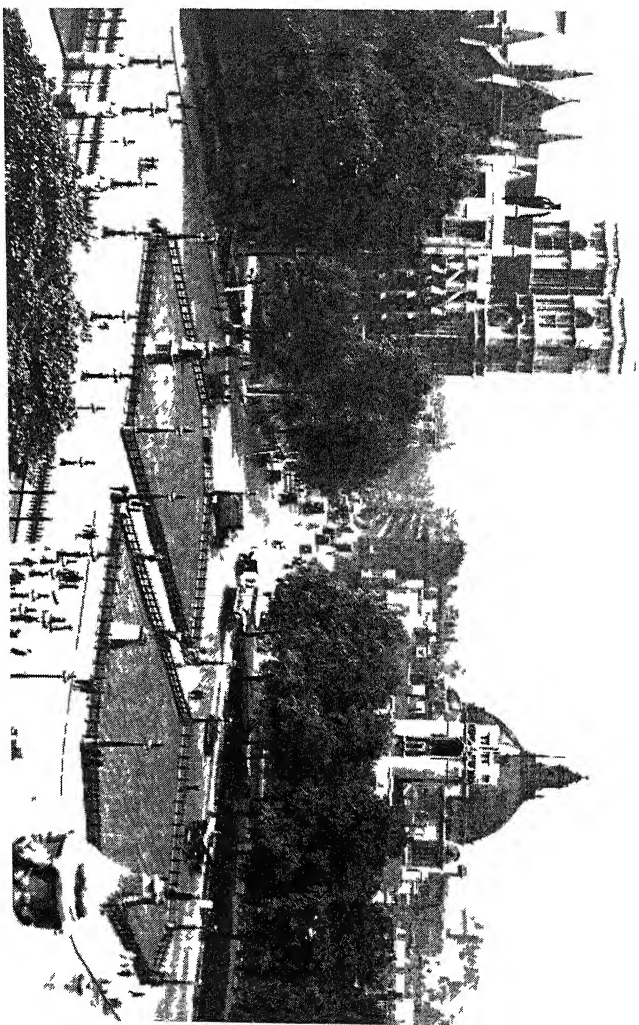
To the left there's the Union Jack waving out from the mast-head on top of the Victoria tower of the Parliament buildings. Through the great gateway in that tower the King's golden coach passes when he goes to open Parliament in state. A brave show that! By turning my head I can see Big Ben towering up into the sky—and the gates of the palace yard where the M.P.'s enter afoot or in their cars.

If I turn round I can see right up Whitehall—past the cenotaph with the standards on either side of it, to the miniature white domes of the war office. All the great pageants in England's life pass that way. A noble street is Whitehall!

Alongside me on this seat there's an out-of-work, almost in rags, and so fast asleep that the roar of the buses and taxis disturbs him not at all. His boots are worn through and his coat all patched and shiny; his head slumps forward on his chest. I wonder what tale of sadness is hidden there?

Big Ben is striking half past two. The bells of St. Margaret's are pealing out joyously. A crowd of women have gathered from goodness-knows-where forming a lane across the sidewalk from the awning to the bridal car. They wave their handkerchiefs to the happy couple—not that they know in the least who they are, but just because no normal Englishwoman can resist a wedding and the fun of wishing the bride good luck. Now the guests are pouring out of the church—it must be a swagger wedding by the number of men in shiny "toppers" and with white buttonholes. Away they go in a long procession—some of the men are crowded into the front seats with the chauffeurs; they're off to the wedding reception somewhere in Mayfair, I expect.

The poor down-and-out beside me sleeps soundly



PARLIAMENT SQUARE—" THE HEART OF A NATION BEATS HERE "

through all the uproar ; neither Big Ben's booming notes nor the crash of the wedding bells can rouse him.

A tall, grave figure stops a moment near me to check his watch by Big Ben. He wears a grey soft hat and carries a brown attaché case under his arm. That's Lord Sankey, the Lord Chancellor, going to the House of Lords, I suppose. A man of noble character is Lord Sankey, universally respected, simple and unassuming as the humblest of the King's subjects. A Westminster school boy, in tail coat and "topper" two sizes too large for him, is stopping now, trying to get a pigeon to alight on his outstretched hand.

Already an elderly workman is busy taking down the awning in front of St. Margaret's. I expect he'll have to put it up again to-morrow—for not many days pass without a fashionable wedding in "Parliament's parish church."

What a medley of sights the big bronze statue of Disraeli—and his neighbours Sir Robert Peel and the great Lord Derby—must see in the round of a year. Half of the nation's joys and sorrows revolve round these little plots of smooth, green grass. Pageantry of King and Parliament ; angry outbursts of the workless against the injustice of their lot ; happy brides and grooms going on their way with joybells ringing in their ears ; wretched out-of-works sleeping on the hard seats from sheer exhaustion ; the ceaseless roar of scarlet buses, taxis, lorries—the heart of the nation throbs here in Parliament Square.

* * * * *

2. If I were asked what had been the most profoundly moving experience of my life, I should say, without hesitation, "Armistice Day in London." Three times I have stood in Whitehall, opposite the great white cenotaph, witnessing and taking part in this wonderful, most perfectly designed act of remembrance—and each time it has stirred me as nothing else of the kind has ever done.

Since 1918 I have spent those two minutes of memory-laden silence in all sorts of varied places. Once the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of November found me on a lonely trail on Vancouver Island, and with an Indian whom I had chanced to meet, I stood with bared head in the silence of the forest. Several times I stood in the crowd before the Cenotaph in Vancouver; once on Parliament Hill in Ottawa; in 1921, while the Disarmament Conference was sitting, I looked down on a huge crowd from the top of the Arlington Memorial at Washington; once I was at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and witnessed the great military display which marks the occasion in the French capital.

Pictures of these other Armistice Days may fade in time—but the memories of Whitehall, when this great nation pays the noblest tribute to its dead that has ever been devised, will remain while life lasts.

Three times I have watched the assembly of that vast concourse of people which stretches from Parliament Square to Trafalgar Square and stands there hour after hour silent and subdued—so utterly unlike an English crowd on any other occasion. I know exactly what will happen—how the white-helmeted Marines will march to their position on the abbey side of the Cenotaph; how the Royal Navy in their sombre blue will halt; where the disabled and blinded veterans will take up their position—with the widows and orphans, clasping bunches of flowers in their hands, behind them. I know just how the King, or the Prince of Wales, will lead the little procession of members of the Royal Family to their appointed places; how the aged Bishop of London, with his surplice billowing in the breeze, will follow behind the white-robed choir to the far side.

With all these thousands I have felt, year after year, the growing tension as the guards' band soothes, saddens and uplifts us with the strains of Chopin's Funeral march.

I have waited, tense and expectant, watching, over the chimney pots, the great hands of Big Ben gradually approaching the hour. Then, as the first stroke of eleven has boomed out and the eerie hollowness of utter silence has enfolded us, the faces and forms which I can see so clearly in my mind have been merged with a million others in the vast ghostly picture of those who made the great sacrifice.

Later, I have gone to Westminster Abbey; have seen that endless procession pass into the misty dimness of the nave and file by the black marble slab which marks the Unknown Warrior's grave; have watched each one pause a moment with bowed head and quietly place there a scarlet poppy until the tomb is hidden beneath a great mound of glowing colour.

And after dark, on the green lawns just outside the Abbey, the floodlights throw into relief tens of thousands of tiny crosses and scarlet poppies planted there—each in memory of some loved one who died on a foreign field. Far into the night the procession goes on and the fields of Flanders poppies grow more dense as the hours go by.

And when all the solemn ceremonies, and the simple individual acts of remembrance, have been performed, the old soldiers—members of the British Legion—gather for their own "Festival of Remembrance" at the Albert Hall.

There, with the King and Queen and their family among them, ten thousand veterans, sporting their medals on their mufti suits, recall the happier moments of those stupendous years of struggle. How they shout all the old songs—"Tipperary," "Are We Downhearted?" "Who's your Lady Friend?" and all the rest of them, with the King and Queen joining in and the Duchess of York beating time to the music with her programme and enjoying it all as much as any in the huge company.

There is pageantry too—massed bands of the Brigade of Guards in brilliant uniforms, veterans of old campaigns

from Chelsea Hospital marching in in their long scarlet coats; nurses, soldiers, sailors, boy scouts and innumerable banners of the legion branches—a wonderfully organised spectacle of colour and patriotic display.

And after all the singing and the fun, the lights go out and the vast round building is plunged in twilight. From high up, in the organ loft, there falls on the stillness the sound of a boy's voice singing "O Valiant Hearts." It is the most perfect moment of all.

Through dust of conquest and through battle-flame
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

The silvery notes ring out, soft and clear—and from the roof there falls a shower of scarlet poppy petals—1,104,890 in number—one for each of the Empire's dead.

Finally—still in the half light, Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Charles Madden, stands on the platform and recites—so quietly—those immortal lines :

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not wither them, nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

So comes the end of "Remembrance Day" as it is coming to be called—a day which Britain keeps now, not as an occasion for celebration and rejoicing, but as one of hallowed memories, of hope and renewed determination to uphold those things for which a million men and women of the empire died.

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